

# Al-Ahram Weekly



Portrait of the week by George Bahgory.....p.8

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## Southern friendship

CHINESE President Jiang Zemin said yesterday that closer ties between Egypt and China would help promote greater cooperation among the nations of the South and set an example for developing countries in the 21st century, reports Nevine Khalil. Jiang spoke at a news conference winding up his official visit to Egypt that began last Monday.

Cementing Egyptian-Chinese friendship would not only serve the interests of the two peoples but would also promote cooperation between countries of the South and set an example for developing countries to emulate, Jiang said. Jiang also spoke of "difficulties and problems" in China's relations with the United States, which he characterised as "sawing" despite some recent improvements. (see p.2)

## Monitors meet

TALKS between representatives of five nations on arrangements to monitor the US-brokered 26 April ceasefire in South Lebanon resumed yesterday in Washington, after failing on Tuesday to reach a broad agreement on major issues.

Ambassadors from Syria, Lebanon, Israel, France and the US chose the Lebanese city of Naqurah as the headquarters of the monitoring group, after five hours of talks on Tuesday. But the representatives differed on the group's functions and the procedures to investigate ceasefire violations.

## Chopper deal

EGYPT has concluded a \$100 million deal with the United States for the supply of 10 SH-2G submarine-hunting helicopters. They are expected to arrive in Egypt in October, reports Galal Nassar. The deal is part of annual US military aid to Egypt totalling 1.3 billion dollars since Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

Under the provisions of the new deal, the US Kaman company will re-equip 10 SH-2F helicopters now being used by the US Navy and convert them into the SH-2G model. The new helicopters will operate in conjunction with Egyptian destroyers and frigates, including the American-built Knox-type frigates Rashid (Rosetta) and Domiat (Damietta). The latter is participating for the first time in the Cleopatra '96 war games, grouping Egypt, France and Italy. (see p.3)

## Pharos ruins

THE NEW season of the French-Egyptian archaeological excavation of the submerged ruins of Pharos Island off Qait Bey Fort in Alexandria began on an auspicious note, reports Hala Hailu. The chronic problem posed by the presence of a freshwater on top of the antiquities has been resolved with the announcement by the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) this week that the 180 concrete blocks are to be removed. "The concrete blocks are not going to be completely raised from the site, but deposited elsewhere underwater," said Abdel-Halim Nouredin, secretary-general of the SCA.

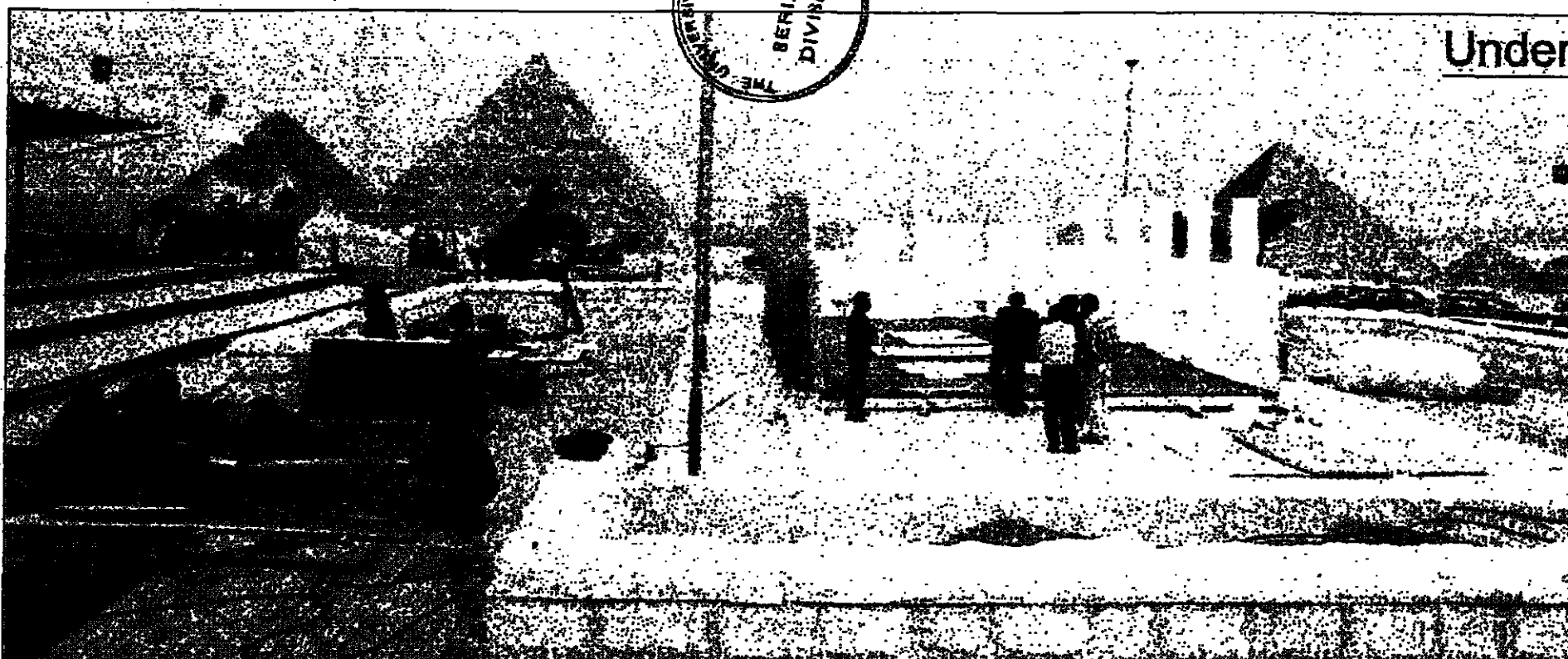
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## Under Khufu's eyes

IN a showcase competition, 56 squash players representing 13 countries will test their mettle against each other in the first Al-Ahram International Squash Championship, reports Inas Mazhar.

The qualifying and first rounds are currently being played in the Cairo Stadium indoor complex. Beginning Saturday, the second round main draw matches, however, will be played on a state-of-the-art glass court on the Pyramids Plateau.

Under the blazing Giza sun, flanked by the shadows of the three great pyramids of Khufu, Khafre and Menkaure, and surrounded by the walls of the glass court, they will compete for the 100,000 pot.

The 100,000 pounds sterling court was brought in from London last Saturday and is being erected by British engineers using equipment provided by Al-Ahram Organisation. Army staff, combining their logistic skills and manpower, will build the spectator stands surrounding the court.

photo:Hossam Diab

# Arafat shuffling with a new deck

Talks with an Islamist party may be the reason why Arafat has yet to assign the portfolios of his first cabinet, writes Tarek Hassan from Gaza

## Portfolios assignment postponed

AS HE walked to the city hall of the West Bank town of Bethlehem yesterday, Arafat was met by a large group of Palestinians protesting the arrests of numerous Islamic activists by the Palestinian authority, reported AFP. Arafat is in Bethlehem to attend a two-day Palestinian Council session which was supposed to witness the announcement of the assignment of portfolios to the 26 Palestinian cabinet members, whose names were announced last week.

Council speaker, Ahmed Korei, said Arafat planned to announce the distribution of portfolios at next week's legislative session in Gaza City.

Also yesterday the Israeli authorities prevented Intisar Al-Wazir, a member of the new Palestinian cabinet and widow of assassinated Palestinian leader Abu Jihad, from travelling from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank to attend a meeting of the self-

rule council in Bethlehem.

Nabil Shaath, a close aide to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, said Israeli authorities claimed that her travel pass was revoked last month after she was accused of transporting a Hamas activist in her car from Gaza to the West Bank. Israelis refused an offer by Shaath to take her in his car, saying she should have boarded an earlier bus carrying other Gaza members of the legislative council.

One significant feature of the new cabinet is the huge discrepancy between the percentage of those members belonging to the PLO's Executive Committee, traditionally the highest Palestinian decision-making body, and that of members of the Palestinian Council residing in the self-rule areas, in the favour of the latter group. Reducing the number of PLO old guards to a symbolic figure has been one of Arafat's main tactics since his peace deal with Israel.

Thus Arafat's recent demand that Israel allow the Palestinian Authority to run the PLO's diplomatic missions abroad came as no surprise to anybody. It is a long-overdue snub to the PLO's political department and its Tunis-based president Farouq Qaddoumi, the Palestinian Foreign Minister, who refused to join Arafat in Gaza because of his opposition to the Oslo Accords.

In his bid to have full control over the new cabinet, Arafat has also played his usual card: a balanced mix of members belonging to influential Palestinian families in various important regions. Among the most prominent sons of notables in the new cabinet are a member of the wealthy Al-Masri family from Nablus, a member of the influential Hebron Al-Qawasmei family, and Fathi Abu Meddin from Gaza.

The one important region which seems under-represented in the new cabinet, given its importance in the final status negotiations, is Jerusalem, with only two names, Hassan Tabboub, a religious figure, and Bashir Barghouti, a communist who is not from Jerusalem proper, but from neighbouring Ramallah.

Many Palestinian commentators believe that Arafat's new cabinet lacks the strength that will be required to successfully navigate the difficult phase ahead. They suspect that in selecting his cabinet Arafat has once again reserved for himself the dominant role in the Palestinian arena, regardless of whether that involves voicing dissent or, on the domestic front and at the negotiating table.

its first man, Bashir Barghouti, rather than his deputy, Soliman Najab, who represents the party on the PLO Executive Committee.

Another newcomer to the Palestinian official scene is Abdel-Jawad Saleh, the former mayor of Beirah, who was expelled by the Israelis in the 1970s and who served on the PLO Executive Committee during the 1980s as an independent member. Ever since his return to Ramallah last year, Saleh has been considered a key figure in the opposition to Arafat, and he reaped the highest votes in the Ramallah constituency during last January's elections for his opposition to Oslo. Now many observers doubt whether Saleh will be as vociferous as many supporters expected in his position inside the Legislative Council.

In fact, almost 80 per cent of the new cabinet was formed of members of the newly elected legislative council, and many observers believe that Arafat has sought to undermine opposition within the council through this move. One cannot really consider the members of the council to be one unified bloc within the cabinet, however, since most of the council members in the cabinet are

drawn from Arafat's organisation, Fatah. The only council members inside the new cabinet who are neither members of Fatah nor close to it are Abdel-Jawad Saleh and Emad El-Falougi, the former Hamas member who broke ranks with his organisation to support Arafat. Bearing in mind El-Falougi's special relationship with Arafat, it is most unlikely that he will play a prominent oppositional role within the cabinet. Thus so far Saleh, along with Barghouti, and possibly the two or three ministers to be nominated this week, are those expected to express dissent, albeit not very loudly, in discussions of the many crucial issues upon which the new cabinet will have to rule.

When the new cabinet met in Gaza last Saturday, it formed a committee to draft a political, economic and social programme. It is the programme, more than the formation of the cabinet, that matters for Arafat; last week he made it clear that he wants the council's vote of confidence on his new cabinet to be based on that programme. He needs the vote if he is to proceed in his negotiations with the Israelis from a position of strength.

## Press law bargaining

Dissent continues in the committee drafting a new press law, but the Press Syndicate's chairman remains optimistic a fair compromise will be reached, reports Shaden Shehab



photo: Tarek Fares

A widespread perception amongst journalists that a Shura Council committee drafting a new press law will not agree to meet its demands has re-ignited the confrontation between the government and the press. However, Ibrahim Nafie, chairman of the Press Syndicate, remains convinced that a mutually agreeable solution can be reached in the end.

The committee has witnessed several stormy sessions, with splits on many issues regarding the new law. Reports that several members on the committee are insisting on the provision of harsh penalties for publishing offences and restrictions on press freedom, have disappointed and angered journalists, who had believed that the committee was set up to draft a more liberal law than Law 93, passed nearly a year ago.

However, Nafie, who as syndicate chairman is a member of the committee, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* he was "optimistic that a compromise will be reached in the end, one that will strike a fair balance between media rights and obligations." In Nafie's view, "it is only natural to find diverse points of view in any discussion between the syndicate and the decision makers." He predicted, however, that "80 per cent of the journalists' demands will be agreed on by the committee."

The journalists had proposed amendments which went beyond cancellation of Law 93 to which they objected. The journalists' main goal, Nafie added, "was to cancel all the provisions of Law 93, and this is exactly what we will achieve. We cannot have it all; what is important is that we do not give up our basic rights and demands." The crisis between the government and journalists erupted at the end of last May, when the government rushed amendments to the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedures Law, known as Law 93 of 1995, through the People's Assembly. Enraged journalists held six extraordinary general assemblies in the Press Syndicate in quick succession, pledging to get the law repealed, and threatened to stage a general strike on 24 June. However, President Hosni Mubarak inter-

vened, and met with the Press Syndicate's council. A semi-governmental committee, including journalists and legal experts, was set up to draft a new press law, and worked on it from mid-July last year until last March. During a 10 March extraordinary general assembly, journalists demanded some amendments to the draft as a precondition to the syndicate's approval. The draft press law and the amendments were submitted to President Mubarak who in turn passed them on to the Shura Council committee.

The committee is expected to complete its discussions on 25 May. The full Shura Council will then discuss the draft, before it is returned to President Mubarak, who in turn will submit it to the People's Assembly for final enactment. The confrontation took a sharp turn when Ibrahim Nafie, chairman of the Press Syndicate and a member of the Shura Council committee, walked out of a committee meeting when the group refused to amend an article stating that a member of the Supreme Press Council must attend meetings of the Press Syndicate's disciplinary board. Nafie is insisting that the board should be limited to syndicate members. He also opposes articles imposing prison sentences on those found guilty of libel, an offence he believes should be punishable by fines only.

As a result, the Press Syndicate council held a meeting and issued a statement saying the council insisted that a new press law must "include all the amendments that the syndicate and general assembly agreed upon." The council, the statement said, would "abide by Mubarak's initiative, which calls for a civilised and comprehensive press law to take us into the 21st century."

It continued: "The council is surprised that the suggestions of some members of the Shura Council committee reflect a desire to restrict press freedom, limit the legitimate rights of journalists, and place some sort of control on the Press Syndicate."

The syndicate's council agreed to call an extraordinary general assembly on 21 May. "If the outcome of the Shura Council com-

mittee is not in the journalists' favour, the council is planning to suggest a sit-in on 27 May as a protest," said council member Magdi Mehanna. "We will also suggest celebrating 10 June (the date of the first extraordinary general assembly) as 'Journalists' Day'. This is all we can do. We can only express our refusal."

On the same day Nafie walked out, Mustafa Kamel Murad, leader of the opposition Liberal Party withdrew from the committee altogether. Murad told the *Weekly* that the "committee's main target is to entrap journalists in any way possible." Most of the committee members, he added, were obsessed with placing more restrictions on the freedom of the press and finding ways to put journalists in jail. "I will not allow myself to take part in this," he vowed.

Salaheddin Hafez, managing editor of *Al-Ahram* told the *Weekly* he agreed that the committee was "dominated by extremist members who are striving to place restrictions on the freedom of the press." Their numbers, he added, greatly exceed those whose liberal thinking is "in accordance with the country's democratic process." He cited the insistence of many members that libel offences should be punishable by imprisonment, pointing out that such a policy is at variance with that of developed countries, where only fines are imposed in such cases. The committee, Hafez added, "is totally ignoring the amendments demanded by the journalists."

Hafez sees the journalists' next general assembly as a watershed, because "it will determine how things will develop in the next stage."

There was, however, some relief among journalists when the committee agreed on five articles of the draft press law that were included in their demands. The most important of these states that no writer should be taken into custody in connection with a publication offence except in one case — violating Article 179 of the Penal Code, which deals with insulting or defaming the president of the republic.

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**After forty years of diplomatic relations, Egypt and China turn to each other for support both on the regional and international levels, writes**  
**Nevine Khalil**

China has always supported Arab causes, and as a permanent member of the Security Council has frequently stood by them. Last month, China backed Egypt's position for lighter diplomatic sanctions against Sudan instead of the strong economic sanctions or an arms embargo proposed by the US. China takes a more moderate stand than the US in continuing sanctions against Iraq, because it believes that imposing sanctions on any country harms its people. It also supported the Arab viewpoint when Israel shelled Lebanon for 17 days. Egypt complained that US bias towards Israel, topped by Wash-

In the international arena, Egypt looks to China to balance out Western biases in such conflicts as the Lockerbie crisis, and the suffering of the Iraqi people. "The new world order is in dire need of China's independent stands. China is a great power playing an important role on the world

In addition, China is to build a goods promotion centre in Alexandria, similar to the free zone in Port Said, for its products, an idea first suggested by Mubarak while visiting Beijing in 1994. Egypt imports textiles, electrical, chemical and agricultural goods from China, and imports from China last year amounted to \$450



Jiang also met with parliament speaker Fathi Sorour and Shura Council chairman Mustafa Kamal Helmi. Yesterday, he visited a ceramics factory in the 10th of Ramadan City, as well as a carpet factory. The Chinese delegation included the foreign minister, the minister of foreign trade and economic cooperation, as well as the minister of interior.

Jiang's visit to Egypt, the first since he became president in his part of his inaugural tour of the continent, aimed at strengthening Sino-Egyptian relations. It began with visits to Addis Ababa and Ethiopia, and will continue to Harare, Namibia and Zimbabwe. While in Harare, Jiang visited the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) headquarters and met with its secretary-general, Salim Ahmed Salim. In a show of further support and interest in Sino-Egyptian relations, Jiang donated \$300,000 to the OAU.

Sheng told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that steps will be made on both sides to increase trade following Jiang's visit. "We should import more goods from Egypt," Sheng acknowledged. However, the problem lies with the Egyptian side, mainly because of its uncompetitive prices. "Our trade is free and we export everything the Egyptians need," he said, "and we hope that Egypt will provide us with a more detailed programme for export goods which are suitable for the Chinese market."

million. On the other hand, Egyptian exports, mainly consisting of raw cotton and steel, add up to only \$15 million.

The Egyptian side has repeatedly expressed dismay at these figures, describing them as "very weak" in comparison to Dubai's \$1 billion and Israel's \$800 million trade with China. While China describes economic relations as "good, but needing gradual development", Egypt is eager to see trade between the two countries multiply many times over.

**The Ministry of Education's new technology centre could help build a new generation of savvy computer users. **Rania Khallaf** reports**

The centre will research and initiate studies to keep abreast of the rapid international development of educational technology, like multi-media computer

The project, said Dr Venese Kamel Gouda, Minister of Scientific Research, will encourage other governmental and private schools to apply new learning systems and train a skilled new generation of scientific researchers. The ministry participated in translating scientific programmes and terminology into Arabic and preparing multi-

The restoration of the palace, which cost LE11 million, retains its architectural style. The palace is decorated with stained glass, gilded ornaments and Roman columns. The first floor of the building includes the office of Ali Mubarak, a pioneer thinker and Minister of Education for four terms between 1868 and 1891.

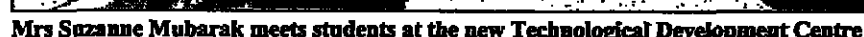


photo:Ahmed Alfi

The espionage trial of a former naval sergeant has stirred controversy in his home village about Egyptians working in Israel. **Omayma Abdel-Latif** visits Nawasa El-Gheit

There is hardly anything unusual about Nawassa El-Gbiet, located 120km north of Cairo, that would make it stand out among the hundreds of other Delta villages surrounding it. But media reports claim the village is notorious for exporting its young men to work in Israel. Residents, however,

According to one doctor, the village's recent past closely mirrors the political and economic changes the region has gone through during the past decade. In the late

Both El-Tanony and El-Gharyla believe that the government should seriously consider revising the decision which lifted the restrictions on travelling to Israel. "These restrictions should be re-activated since the Israelis are now fighting with covert weapons," El-Tanony said.

**THE HEAD** of the Doctors' Syndicate, Dr Hamdi El-Sayed, has

Normalisation with Israel is banned, according to the regulations of the syndicate's general assembly, and any doctor who does not abide by these regulations is subject to disciplinary action against a doctor who recently visited Israel.

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After nearly four months of testing the airwaves, the Upper Egyptian channel 8 is now ready for the TV screens. **Rehab Saad** reports

The new channel makes Egypt's regional coverage more comprehensive, adding Upper Egypt to

Since all Channel 8 employees are from Qena, Sohag and Aswan, they will have the opportunity to demonstrate their talent as broadcasters and even as actors, said Ghaleb. The station's studios "can per-

Equipped with three video cameras (and expecting another three), 16 directors, 15 script writers, nine interviewers, three news anchors, six programme announcers, five translators and an administrative cadre, Hashem Ghaleb is confident that the new channel has enough potential to compete with Cairo TV stations, especially if they present riddles of their own next Ramadan: "The riddles will be part of our culture," he said. "They will mainly be about *saidi* (Upper Egyptian) personalities who played important, positive roles in our society, like writers Abbas El-Aqqad and Kifah El-Tahtawi."

**Egypt, France and Italy join the world in a week in which 100 games take place. Up some 100 participants in the first time France uses nuclear-powered submarines in the first time. Gaia Nassis, the executive director, ponders the political implications.**

The War Department has announced that it has received information from the Japanese Government that the Japanese Government has decided to withdraw its troops from the North China coast and to return them to the Japanese mainland. The Japanese Government has also announced that it has decided to withdraw its troops from the North China coast and to return them to the Japanese mainland. The Japanese Government has also announced that it has decided to withdraw its troops from the North China coast and to return them to the Japanese mainland.

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A team of nauticians have made the first shipwrecks off the Mediterranean coast about trade in sea. Halim is

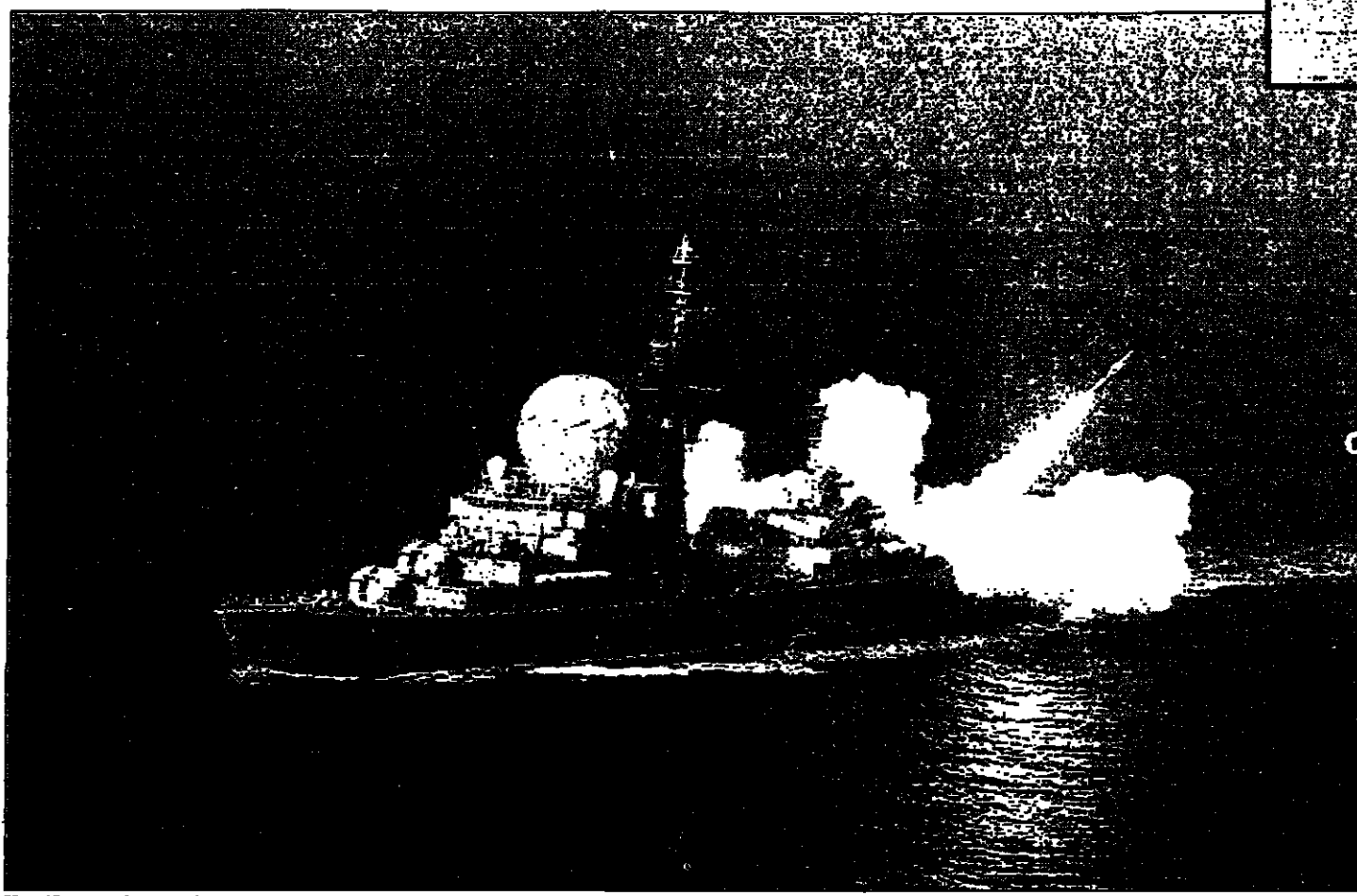
Permits from antiquities authorities of Egypt and the Ministry of Culture, the preliminary survey of shipwrecks in the north-west Mediterranean Sea was conducted this spring. The survey was undertaken by a team of the Egyptian branch of the International Council of Nautical Archaeology in cooperation with the Scientific Committee of Antiquities of the State of Israel, confirmed by SCA Secretary General Abdel-Halim Nouredin. The first of its kind along this stretch



# Cleopatra '96

**Egypt, France and Italy joined this week in naval war games that chalked up some firsts: Italy participated for the first time and France used a nuclear-powered submarine for the first time.**

**Galal Nassar reports on the exercises and ponders their political implications**



The French frigate Duquesne fires an anti-aircraft missile

photos: Hussein Fathi

The Mediterranean's oldest and strongest naval powers — Egypt, France and Italy — joined hands in naval war games this week, deploying a total of 13 naval units off Egypt's northern shores. The exercise, dubbed "Cleopatra 96", began on Saturday and was due to end today. Egypt and France have been conducting joint naval manoeuvres every other year since 1992. This year, Italy joined for the first time.

The exercise was divided into three main stages: the first, which began last Saturday, involved conferences among commanders to draw up training and action plans; the second, which started on Tuesday, consisted of mock battles at sea, about 100 nautical miles from the Egyptian coast and extending all the way from Marsa Matruh in the west to El-Borollos Lake in the east; the third and final phase on Wednesday and Thursday included training to repel air attacks on naval targets as well as meetings among commanders to evaluate the war games and draw lessons from them.

The battle scenario ran like this: enemy naval units guard a ship carrying an important consignment; friendly units intercept the enemy vessels and attack them with naval guns and missiles as well as warplanes; the head-on battle is followed by live-ammunition shooting exercises, including the use of surface-to-surface missiles.

Of the 13 naval units in the games, Egypt contributed seven — the US-made Knox-class destroyer Domiat, the Spanish-built corvette Suez, a Chinese-made Romeo-class submarine and

four missile-launching boats. Egypt also pitched in with a number of F-16 jetfighters, naval reconnaissance planes and helicopters. France participated with four vessels — the anti-submarine frigate Duplex, the missile-armed frigate Duquesne, the command and supply ship Marne and the nuclear-powered submarine Emraude. The French units were manned by a total of 900 sailors. The Italian contingent consisted of two frigates, the Zeffiro and the Sfinco.

The units participating in the mock battles set out at first light on Tuesday, splitting into two forces: a blue force representing the enemy, consisting of Egyptian, French and Italian vessels under a French commander; and the friendly orange force, also with vessels from the three countries but under an Egyptian commander. The French ship Marne played the part of the enemy ship carrying important cargo and the blue force guarded it. The orange force attacked the enemy with air cover provided by Egyptian F-16 fighters.

During the mock fighting the two sides performed training exercises in refuelling, moving wounded personnel, rescuing drowning seamen and salvaging equipment. The night-time battles featured electronic warfare and radar jamming.

Submarines also played their part, trying to dodge underwater sonar to avoid detection. On Wednesday morning, the blue and orange forces teamed up for a joint exercise to repel enemy aircraft attacking the naval formation comprising all 13 vessels. The raiding aircraft were Egyptian F-16s that came under naval fire from rocket launchers and surface-to-air missiles. A

shooting drill followed, using live surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles, before the joint fleet returned to base in Alexandria.

Egypt's Vice Admiral Essam Badawi, the Navy's director of training, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that "Cleopatra 96" is the third biennial round of war games since 1992. Italy is participating this year for the first time at its own request, he added.

"Apart from the US 6th Fleet, Egypt, France and Italy are the oldest and strongest naval powers in the Mediterranean," Badawi said. "So their naval forces had to strive to establish close friendly links among their officers for the sake of Mediterranean security and stability." He noted that this was the first time France threw in a nuclear-powered submarine, "and this changed the tactical concept of the manoeuvres this year. We concentrated on submarine detection and repelling enemy attacks."

Badawi also remarked that the war games combined advanced Western-made armament with Eastern-built weaponry developed with Egyptian expertise to test them on an actual theatre of operations. Another noteworthy feature, he said, was the use of Egyptian missile-launching boats of the Ramadan class. "It is well-known that Egypt is the best country in the world in the use of missile-launching boats in combat," Badawi said. "We have had experience in this."

Captain Marin Gillier, the French Naval Attaché in Cairo, spoke to *Al-Ahram Weekly* about what he perceived as important highlights of the manoeuvres. "The exercise this year involved

both day-time and night-time action and is bound to have many benefits, foremost among them the collective and cooperative effort made in supply, movement of ships at sea and shooting at surface targets." He also cited anti-submarine warfare and action against raiding F-16 aircraft as well as the use of ship-based helicopters.

Gillier said that Egyptian and French naval officers began meetings in Egypt and France last March to prepare for the war games.

Egypt launched a new policy of joint military manoeuvres with foreign countries after signing a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. Most prominent among these exercises is the "Bright Star" series held every two years with the United States in Egypt's Western Desert and along the northern coast. The latest in this series was conducted in 1995 and lasted seven days. It was by far the biggest to date: besides the United States and Egypt, it included contingents from Britain, France and the United Arab Emirates. A total of 56,000 troops participated in it along with 800 aircraft and 30 naval units, including an aircraft carrier. The types of ground forces taking part included infantry, mechanised units, armour, paratroopers, commandos, marines and electronic warfare personnel.

Egypt has been holding joint naval exercises with the United States and Britain in the Red Sea in June every year. Egypt and Britain also have a separate series of joint naval manoeuvres dubbed "Sea Winds" in the Mediterranean.

## The politics behind

PARTICIPATION in the "Cleopatra 96" joint naval war games with Egypt and Italy is France's latest move in a five-year-old effort to project itself as a force to be reckoned with in the Middle East and Gulf regions. France clearly wants to counter-balance the influence of the United States in the two regions.

France was a member of the international military alliance, led by the US, which ejected Iraqi troops from Kuwait in 1991. After the war, France began vying with the US for a presence in the Gulf, concluding several joint defence agreements with Gulf countries and began to provide them with arms. It also joined in promoting their economic and industrial development.

In his book *The Black and the Green — Fundamentalism, Oil and the Dollar*, France's former Defence Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement wrote in a chapter devoted to US policy that the Gulf War was primarily "a war against Europe behind its back". He said the conflict in the Gulf between Europe and Japan, on the one hand, and the US, on the other, was essentially a conflict of strategic and economic interests.

It was natural that France should try to regain an effective presence in the Middle East to restore the equilibrium.

Having established a footing in the Gulf militarily and economically, France stepped into the Arab-Israeli fray at the height of Israel's massive attacks on southern Lebanon following suicide bombings inside Israel last February. France sent its foreign minister to the region to help negotiate a truce and be made parallel shuttles with those undertaken by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher. France contributed handsomely to the truce eventually concluded last month.

Now, France is back in prominence in the region, joining Egypt and Italy in naval exercises in the Mediterranean.

In an interview published last February, French Defence Minister Charles Millon emphasised France's interest in Middle East issues, especially those involving Lebanon and Syria, in the light of the accelerating efforts for a peace settlement with Israel. France wants to have a role in security guarantees in southern Lebanon and Syria's Golan Heights in an eventual peace agreement with Israel.

Under the recent truce between Lebanon and Israel, France became one of the countries making up a supervision mechanism. Other members of the team are the US, Israel, Syria and Lebanon.

French President Jacques Chirac has a clear vision of what France should do to rebuild its stature in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. Chirac has selected what he considers a "guaranteed" ally to serve as France's bridge to the Arab world and a point of rest in the Mediterranean basin — Lebanon. France is contributing substantially to Lebanon's reconstruction after 15 years of civil war.

Chirac also believes that it is in Europe's interest to look south and deal with the Arab countries overlooking the southern shores of the Mediterranean — a process that has already started. Chirac views the US role of peace broker in the Middle East as being tilted in Israel's favour. Consequently, he holds that France should play a full balancing role in an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. "We must play our part in full to save the peace process and to entrench a settlement," he said. This position explains the part France played in achieving last month's Israel-Lebanon truce. Chirac also has described the Gulf region as "an excellent ally and economic and strategic partner" for Europe generally and France in particular.

France's current active movement toward the Middle East and the southern countries of the Mediterranean basin, including Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, is an integral part of French strategy. This includes participation with these countries in economic, military and security activities. French participation, along with Italy, the current chairman of the European Union, in the "Cleopatra 96" naval manoeuvres is clear evidence that Paris fully realises that Egypt is a key to the Middle East and Mediterranean regions.

## Monumental appeal in parliament

Some of Egypt's most precious monuments are crumbling to pieces. The Higher Antiquities Council has been making the case for urgent action

Recent parliamentary debates and a long speech delivered by Abdel-Halim Nouredin, secretary-general of the Higher Antiquities Council (HAC), to the Culture, Tourism and Information committees of the People's Assembly have revealed that there is a pressing need for a wide-scale national campaign to restore some of Egypt's most precious monuments.

The parliamentary debates raised two main concerns: one is that national development plans could negatively affect Egyptian monuments and the other is that restoring the monuments could destabilise social conditions in areas where monuments are densely populated by poor families.

According to Nouredin, a number of national development plans are currently posing a direct threat to monuments and antiquities. "For example, we now have problems with the Irrigation Ministry because the El-Salam canal project in Sinai could directly destroy a number of antiquities there," he said. He pointed out that some sections of the new line of the Cairo underground metro, the Sound and Light structure in the Pyramids area and the Mensa

House Hotel in Giza were all "floating on a sea of antiquities".

Nouredin insisted that the new ring road being constructed around Cairo and the bridge being built over the Nile in Luxor could both seriously threaten priceless monuments. The Luxor bridge, he said, was being erected despite opposition from the HAC and a presidential decree that bans anything being constructed within six kilometres of ancient sites.

According to Nouredin, the Luxor bridge lies just 400 metres away from antiquities on the west bank of the Nile. The HAC's secretary-general added, furthermore, that his organisation's consent to the Cairo ring road was "a grave mistake".

"The fact is that most people here in Egypt still forget that these monuments are no longer ours, but are now under UNESCO's direct supervision," said Nouredin. "We do not have the right to undertake any projects that could seriously affect historical monuments." Nouredin concluded that the two objectives of establishing new development projects and preserving old monuments should go hand in hand; one should not be at the expense of the other.

Another problem is that the HAC faces a severe shortage of funds. "As a matter of fact we need as many as 6,000 flats to house people who may be evicted from homes near as many as 600 Islamic and Coptic monuments in Cairo; we cannot just throw them into the streets," said Nouredin. In Luxor, the HAC needs 2,500 flats to house families currently living in the El-Korana antiquities area, which holds a third of the world's ancient monuments, including the Valley of the Kings.

"The problem is that encroachments on antiquities and monuments are made not only by poor families, but also by state authorities," said Nouredin. "For example, the Education Ministry occupies 14 historical monuments, the ruling National Democratic Party occupies 10, fire and water stations occupy 62, while 75 monuments in the Islamic area of El-Azhar and Ghouriya are leased as shops." Nouredin mentioned, however, that a recently formed national committee had managed to rid 148 monuments of encroachments in Upper Egypt out of a total of 691 affected, 30 out of 367 in the Delta, and 71 out of 730 in Cairo and Giza.

But the costs of restoring monuments in Egypt are exorbitant. "We need LE35 million to restore the Hanging Church in Coptic Cairo and LE35 million to restore the Islamic area of Ghouriya. Monuments at the Citadel in Cairo need LE25-30 million, and Luxor monuments need between LE15-17 million," said Nouredin. In all, the HAC needs as much as LE500 million a year to launch a large-scale campaign to restore Egyptian monuments. Unfortunately, according to Nouredin, the HAC's annual revenues are only in the region of LE80-90 million — mainly generated from the sale of tickets to historical sites.

The HAC's secretary-general was happy to mention, however, that his organisation, which employs up to 26,000 personnel, had recently received a \$15 million grant from the United States Congress and LE150,000 from the Arab Development Fund. President Hosni Mubarak has also approved the allocation of LE100 million for restoration work, of which LE30 million is destined for the Pyramids area.

Salah El-Taroty, chairman of the Assembly's Culture Committee, said that the earthquake of 1992 threw into sharp focus the fact that many ancient

Egyptian monuments were crumbling to pieces. He criticised the poor technical qualifications of contractors undertaking the repair work. According to him, the recent collapse of the ceiling in the Mosque of Amr ibn El-As was largely due to unprofessional restoration.

Yehia Shaalan, parliamentary deputy for Luxor, and Radwan El-Sher, deputy for the Pyramids area in Giza, laid blame at the feet of Culture Minister Farouk Hosni and the HAC. The deputies both felt that the HAC had not formulated a clear-cut strategy on restoration work and that Hosni rarely paid field visits to historical monuments. Other deputies called for a number of district museums to be established and for there to be tighter control to prevent the smuggling of Egyptian antiquities.

Nouredin concluded that Egypt's historical monuments required more help than the HAC alone could give. "It needs the efforts of everyone and the collaboration of the ministries of Culture, Education, Local Administration, Agriculture, the Interior and Awqaf to save some of Egypt's most precious ancient treasures," he said.

## Coasting along ancient routes

A team of nautical archaeologists have made the first survey ever of shipwrecks off Egypt's Mediterranean coast to discover more about trade in earlier eras. Hala Halim investigates



L-R: A Koan amphora (late third to early second century BC) found at Ras Hawala; the stone sand anchor being raised at Ras El-Hikma



cargo of a late-seventeenth century wreck of a merchant ship near Sadana Island in the Red Sea, surveyed by the INA-SCA team last summer. While pieces of the same type of porcelain have been found in Turkey, indicating one possible trade route followed by the Sadana ship, this shard revealed that another destination of the ship's cargo could have been North Africa.

But providence was not always so bountiful: on certain sites, recalcitrant weather conditions prohibited divers from inspecting reported shipwrecks. In Bir Saleh, for example, the team could not investigate the shipwreck, but nevertheless found on land opposite the harbour a fresh water well, remains of buildings and coins. Most interestingly, however, the site was littered with glass shards of many colours, indicating that a glass production centre had once existed in the area. At Ras El-Hikma, on the other hand, the team were able to verify the fishermen's accounts of broken and intact amphorae around an island near the coast.

From the abundance of archaeological remains found on this site, Haldane believes that a number of ships sank here. In addition to bits of wood covering the sea bed, a stone sand anchor was found and raised. The amphorae found at the Ras El-Hikma site date from the

first century BC to the seventh century AD, and come from different parts of the Mediterranean. Here, as elsewhere, the contents of the amphorae were emptied and sifted of sand, the remaining organic material to be analysed later for clues to the ships' cargoes.

The earliest archaeological evidence was found at the team's last stop, Ras Hawala (ancient Calamagum or Promontory of Callias) — a North Aegean amphora dating between the fourth and third centuries BC. Among other objects found at Ras Hawala was a Byzantine iron anchor "of a type dated in other contexts from the seventh to the ninth century AD". On the way to the harbour, the team came upon "a large beachrock city wall", but the remains of the ancient city were covered by dunes.

Although Haldane had hoped to discover a Bronze Age, or Pharaonic, shipwreck, the possibility is not precluded when the team undertakes a more in-depth survey next autumn. Among other sites, the team plan to investigate the area of Marsa Matruh: late Bronze Age Cyprus ware has been found there, and a border fortress of Ramesses II exists at the nearby Zawiy Unm Rakham. As with this preliminary survey, adds Emad Khalil of the INA, the team will be joined by archaeology students from the Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University, for whom such surveys provide their only training in nautical archaeology.

Permits from almost every authority short of Neptune were needed for the preliminary archaeological survey of shipwrecks along Egypt's north-west Mediterranean coast, conducted this spring. The survey, undertaken by a team from the Egyptian branch of the US Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA) in cooperation with the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), was confirmed by SCA Secretary-General Abdel-Halim Nouredin as being the first of its kind to take place along this stretch of the Med-

iterranean coast. Clues for possible sites were mostly based on the observations of local spear fishermen and snorkellers, explained Douglas Haldane, the American director of the team. But amphorae reportedly sighted on reefs or on the sea bed were not necessarily taken to indicate the presence of shipwrecks, since they could simply have been dumped by a crew in the process of cleaning a ship's hold. Another reason for scepticism, Haldane elaborated, was that "the ships and their cargoes, having

sunk in shallow water, have been spread along the sea bed by the waves, thus losing much of their intrinsic archaeological value." However, given that scuba-diving is a relatively recent activity which was in any case prohibited along that stretch of coast for military reasons, plunder of archaeological remains did not present a threat — in contrast to the Red Sea where looting of submerged sites occurs on a regular basis.

The team surveyed 16 reported sites from Sidi Abdel-Rahman to

Ras Hawala, taking in six ancient harbours and one anchorage and investigating land sites in the hope that they would yield evidence relating to sea-faring. Part of the team's immediate aim was to find out how research equipment and strategies were to be adapted to the peculiarities of the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. The survey's wider objective was, as Haldane put it, "to build a body of knowledge [on nau-

tical archaeology in the Mediterranean in Egypt], to network and create a dialogue with others working in the field elsewhere."

As if to underscore the importance of this objective, the team came upon a significant find on land at Ras Gibasa, recalling other finds made in the Red Sea. The small fragment of porcelain from a peony-scrub dish was reminiscent of porcelain ware that formed part of the

Edited by Wadie Kirolos



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## Industrialists on Iraq visit

A DELEGATION from the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FOEI) is scheduled to leave for Iraq tomorrow, with the aim of studying the Iraqi population's basic needs with respect to food and pharmaceuticals. These products are exempted from the UN embargo imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"This is our way of expressing solidarity with the Iraqi people," said Mamdouh Mekki, vice-president of the FOEI. "They have been suffering due to a severe shortage of these essential products."

The delegation will include representatives of companies producing pharmaceuticals, food, clothing and spare parts. Mekki said that the delegation will meet their Iraqi counterparts to evaluate the possibility of cooperation. The visit is also intended to show Iraqis how far Egyptian industry has come in the past few years. "Iraq's isolation is bound to come to an end sooner or later, and when it does, there will be greater opportunities for both business and investment," he said.

The visit comes in response to an invitation by the Iraqi Federation of Industries and Chambers of Commerce. It is not, however, the first visit to Iraq by Egyptian businessmen. Members of the Egyptian Federation of Chambers of Commerce went to Iraq in mid-1994. A second visit came in November 1995, when another delegation headed by Essam El-Khashab, a representative for the Arab Company for Foreign Trade, arrived in Iraq.



# Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

The National Bank, the Egyptian National Bank, and the Bank of the National Mint were the various names used by *Al-Ahram* in the spring and summer of 1898 to refer to the imminent formation of what would ultimately be called The National Bank of Egypt. Formed with Egyptian and European capital in that year, Egypt's first bank to issue bank notes is now approaching its first centennial.

Nearly one hundred years ago, news of the forthcoming bank was greeted with an element of caution. On 26 May 1898, *Al-Ahram* writes, "According to the *Egyptian Gazette*, talks are currently in progress over the creation of a national bank. It appears that the talks will soon bear fruit; because the owners of major financial houses in London have agreed to participate in its formation. Although we are delighted at the prospects of more banks in our country, we are concerned that the new banks will be British owned, yet be called 'national' banks."

The creation of Egypt's first national bank as the 19th century drew to a close marked the culmination of the radical transformation in Egypt's economic and financial system. The process began with the collapse of the Mamluk feudal system and the introduction of capitalism in the reign of Mohamed Ali (1805-48). It is to this period then that we must first turn to see the unfolding of the story of banks and bankers in Egypt.

"Banking is the spirit of capitalism" goes the well-known adage. Yet, as capitalism made its entry into the country under the umbrella of the state, it lacked this prerequisite spirit. This, perhaps, is what enabled Western capitalism, with its established banking spirit, to secure its foothold in the Egyptian economy even before the end of the reign of Mohamed Ali.

Not that Mohamed Ali was oblivious to the need. In 1842 he attempted to inject an element of this spirit with the establishment of the Commercial Bank in Alexandria. According to a contemporary commentator, it was "like the banks of civilized kingdoms in that it would have the authority to set the price of the currency, to set the prices of various commercial and agricultural products subject to trade, to open credits and to arrange transfers." The experiment, however, was doomed to fail as long as the pasha retained full control over all sectors of economic activity.

In spite of this initial failure, the idea of founding a national bank had taken hold. In a sense it was bound to do so. It was increasingly promoted by that group of Europeans sent on educational missions to various Egyptian capitals, where they also assiduously recorded their impressions of the features of life there. Foremost among these was the illustrious Sheikh Rafaa Rafaa-Al-Tahtawi, who commented, "The greatest commercial industry in Paris is the banking system, which is divided into two branches: the royal or government bank and the banks of Paris. In the government banks the people deposit the sums they wish and every year they take a certain profit as stipulated by their law. This profit is not considered usury as long as it does not exceed the amount stipulated in law. The same applies to the banks of Paris, where money is lent and borrowed at an interest. The profit on deposits there is higher than in the royal banks, although money deposited in the latter banks is said to be more secure than in the former."

In addition, many foreigners began to found private banks in Egypt — Oppenheim, Levison and Co. and Landau and Co. In addition a number of Egyptianized Jews and Greeks founded several other banks and the "Bank of the National Mint" was

partially of their progeny. It was they who constituted the backbone of the new spirit of capitalism in Egypt. The Souares Brothers firm was a perfect example. Almost every major project that was in the works in the last decade of the 19th century was associated with the name Souares. Cairo's former transport system is an example. Its demise came with the introduction of the electric tramway in 1896. The Helwan railway, the Cairo sewer project, the narrow-gauge agricultural railways, the sale of government property to the British, all to a greater or lesser extent, had the name Souares behind them. It is thus no surprise to find that the Souares Brothers were instrumental in forming the National Bank of Egypt, after they and a number of other prominent Egyptian capitalist families succeeded in consolidating their ties with prominent banking houses in Europe.

In spite of the initial reserve with which *Al-Ahram* greeted the National Bank, it could not deny its significance. As *Al-Ahram*'s owner, Bichara Tagla, wrote on 12 January 1899, "Firstly it is a great bank. Secondly, it is a prelude to an agricultural bank, which we believe will bring the greatest and most widespread benefit to farmers in general and small farmers in particular."

One advantage of the latter bank, according to Tagla, would be that it would "force banks and large commercial houses to lower the interests on their loans in order to compete with the aforementioned bank." More importantly, an agricultural bank would support the country's primary industry; agriculture. "It would grant loans to small farmers, which would give them the same advantages as large land owners and merchants dealing with the bank."

Such was the potential for the proposed bank that Tagla pleaded, "The rulers and all officials must lend their support to the new project or any bank that would fulfill this function. Indeed, the entire nation should support such projects so as to strengthen our national currency, spread prosperity and alleviate, through the generation of money, the burden of taxes."

It was thus with a spirit of hope, tainted with some caution, that *Al-Ahram* followed the establishment of the National Bank of Egypt. The official birth of the bank is marked by the khedival decree of 25 June 1898, although the bank did not actually open its doors until 5 September. The edict quelled the intense speculation that accompanied the ministerial meetings held during the three days prior to its promulgation. In addition to specifying the amount of capital, the number of shares and the system of subscription, the decree authorised the new bank to issue bank notes. The government would also be empowered to ratify the appointments of the bank's director and his deputies and to appoint two representatives who would be responsible for "monitoring the implementation of the laws and regulations of the bank and auditing the moneys and bonds in its coffers."

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The first Egyptian bank-note went into circulation almost exactly 100 years ago. It was issued the year after the National Bank of Egypt was founded by royal decree in 1898 to become the nation's first government financial institution. Because Britain was occupying Egypt, four of the new bank's 20 directors were Britons, including the chairman of the board. In this instalment of his review of Egypt's contemporary history on the basis of reports published in *Al-Ahram*, Dr Yunan Labib Rizq tells how the bank was established and the obstacles it had to surmount

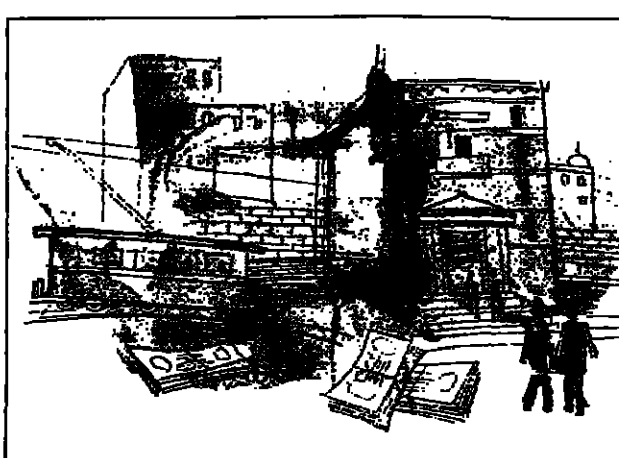


Illustration: Makram Henien

The first board of directors meeting was held on 5 July in the Cairo offices of the Souares Brothers. Sixteen of its twenty members were present. Those were the ones resident in Cairo. Three other members of the board were British. As for the election of the chairman, who was also British, it is a story we will relate in a moment.

Over the next two weeks, *Al-Ahram* published a series of advertisements put out by the board. One reads, "The National Bank is a company with a capital of one million pounds sterling, divided into 100,000 shares worth 10 sterling each, as stipulated in the decree of 25 June." A second advertisement announced the forthcoming sale of the shares and the method of payment: One pound ten shillings upon subscription for each share, then a second instalment of the same amount and finally the remainder "to be paid at specific times and upon conditions set by the board of directors of the bank and in accordance with the pertinent regulations."

Contemporary *Al-Ahram* readers were certain to note alongside the advertisements the newspaper's exhortation to the public: "We pray that citizens respond wholeheartedly to the subscription so as to make this bank 'national' in more than name only. All indications confirm the hopes people have for the success of this bank that enjoys the backing of the Egyptian government. We urge people wishing to subscribe in this venture to do so quickly and not to let the opportunity pass them by."

*Al-Ahram* had no cause for disappointment. The original 20,000 shares put on sale in Egypt were covered 33 times in a single day. "The price of the share has now reached 13 and 1/8 pounds!" *Al-Ahram* cheered.

Rejoicing further that subscriptions exceeded all expectations, *Al-Ahram* comments, "The Souares Brothers are delighted and see this as proof of the great success that is anticipated for the bank. This is the first time in this nation's history that the number of shares on offer has been exceeded 33 times by demand." One dark note, however, was that the number of shares allotted to Egyptians was limited. "We know of Egyptians who subscribed for 100 or 200 shares but were only given three or six."

The process of structuring the bank, which took up the remainder of the year, was the subject of item after item in the news. The first step, to select the chairman of the board of directors, provoked a small storm. Within three days of the promulgation of the khedival decree establishing the bank *Al-Ahram* writes: "We repeat to you a very strange rumour that people have been floating. They say that Sir John Allen Palmer (the British financial advisor) is to be appointed director of the new National Bank at a salary of 4,000 pounds."

Two weeks later the rumour was confirmed with the appointment of Palmer as the director of the bank. "Everyone knows that every economic project that has been introduced in Egypt in recent years has been his brainchild. This includes the national bank where he has just ascended the throne," commented *Al-Ahram*. Nor could contemporary readers have missed the sarcasm when it carped, "The bank will be under exemplary leadership in his hands, for he, more than anyone, is aware of the weaknesses of the Egyptian treasury and the advantages the bank can gain from the government and the people." Nor did it omit mention of the benefits in store for Sir Palmer himself: a salary of 5,000 pounds, a home paid for by the bank and commissions on certain commercial activities. "All of this for a 10-year term. How fortunate some people are!"

The bank in Cairo opened its doors for business on 5 September. Working hours were "from nine in the morning until noon and from three to five in the afternoon and on Saturdays from nine in the morning until noon. It is closed on Sundays." Two weeks later, Sir Palmer presided at the inauguration of the Alexandria branch. The ceremonies "were attended by a large number of prominent merchants and bank directors in the port city."

In the Ministry of Finance, the new British advisor, Sir Eldon Gorst struck up, through the offices of Sir Palmer, a close working relationship between the government and the bank. This is supported by a ministry circular addressed "To all government departments", notifying them that the ministry "has opened a current account in the Egyptian National Bank. Henceforth, all sums to be disbursed to individuals and agencies by the Ministry of Finance shall be paid by cheques drawn on this bank."

The new system caused some alarm in *Al-Ahram*. "The Ministry of Finance will soon be able to dispense with all its tellers and money-counters, dismissing them one after the other as employees grow accustomed to drawing their salaries from the National Bank."

Otherwise, a series of reports indicate that Sir Palmer wasted no time in consolidating the position of the bank by establishing contact with other major banking firms. At the beginning of October, soon after the bank opened, Palmer undertook a European tour "to visit the major banks in Paris, London, Berlin and Brussels in order to establish relations between them and the National Bank."

However, the major task before the bank was issuing bank notes in accordance with the provisions of the khedival decree. On 23 August *Al-Ahram* announced, "The bank will begin to issue paper currency within six months. These will be in denominations of 100 piastres and five, ten and one hundred pounds." However, as obstacles began to rear their heads, it turned out that the task was not so straightforward.

The first obstacle was that the government had previously authorised the Ottoman Bank to issue bank notes. The National Bank protested and threatened to bring a case against the Ministry of Finance before the Mixed Court. However, shortly afterwards, *Al-Ahram* announced, "An accommodation has been reached with the Ottoman Bank regarding the licence to issue bank notes." Subsequent editions of the newspaper revealed the nature of that accommodation. This, we learn, was the approval of the proposal put forward by Sir Palmer "to name Mr Reeves, one of the founders of the Ottoman Bank, as one of the two assistant directors Sir Palmer is entitled to appoint."

The second, and more important obstacle, pertained to the position of the Caisse de la Dette Publique (the National Debt Fund) in control of all the monetary reserves of the Egyptian government. The government could not spend from its reserves unless it had the approval of all the member countries on the Caisse.

On 21 January 1899 the National Bank asked the Caisse to deposit in the bank "the moneys and currencies that equal the value of the bank notes it will issue." The Caisse refused "unless the press that is to mint the currency is brought to Egypt and placed in the premises of the Caisse or the Ministry of Finance and only put into operation in the presence of representatives from the Caisse or the government."

The fear of the Caisse was that it would have to collect its dues in the new paper currency of the bank rather than in gold currency as had been the case until then. Negotiations between the two parties took up the better part of the following three months. In early March progress seemed hopeless. British occupation officials intervened for fear that the new bank would founder if it did not issue bank notes. A solution was forthcoming and we read of it in *Al-Ahram* of 17 March 1899.

"The Ministry of Finance has decided to accept the bank notes issued by the bank and to pay to the Caisse in gold the equivalent of the amounts it allocates to the provinces in paper money. This is in order to guarantee that the government has in its reserves the amount of money equal in value to the currency issued."

Within three weeks, on 3 April to be precise, the National Bank of Egypt minted its first paper currency: a hundred-piastre note with two camels on it and a fifty piastre note bearing pictures of the Sphinx and the Pyramids. The following day the bank transferred to the Ministry of Finance LE4,000 to be put in general circulation, marking the beginning of the history of the Egyptian bank note which has almost completed its first centennial.

The author is a professor of history and head of *Al-Ahram* History Studies Centre.

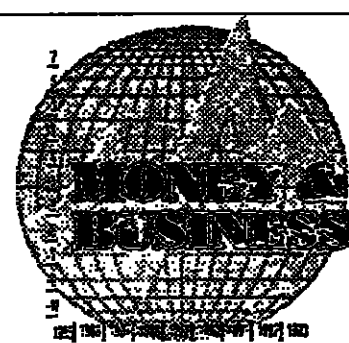


## Enemies cooperate

SOUTH Korea announced that three companies have been given permission to pursue their investments in North Korea, which include Samsung Electronics, Daewoo Electronics and Taichang.

Samsung will invest \$7mn with a telecommunications firm in North Korea to set up a telecommunications centre in North Korea. Daewoo will invest \$6.4mn in a project that produces electrical and electronic equipment. Taichang will invest \$5.3mn in a project to produce mineral water. Such cooperation is unusual in light of the relations between the two countries.

## MONEY & BUSINESS



## Portfolio management company established

THE STOCK Exchange Authority approved the establishment of the International Company for Creation and Management of Stock Portfolios, with licenced capital of LE10mn, issued capital of LE6mn and paid-up capital of LE3mn.

Hussein Shukri, chairman of the board, said that the company's activities will focus on portfolio management and selling securities. He said that the company's establishment comes at a time when the stock market is experiencing a major resurgence, in light of the efforts to implement the country's privatisation programme.

## Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt Health care policy

To support the government's health care policy, Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt embarks on a strategy geared towards providing financing for companies operating in this field, providing the production lines and capital required for setting up medicine factories and hospitals. The amount of financing provided by the bank totalled LE 1.6 billion of which the bank holds shares worth L.E. 22 million.

Company	Location
<b>Medicine Production:</b>	
■ Farco	Ameria - Alexandria
■ Farcoby	Industrial Zone - Borg El Arab
■ Tenth of Ramadan for medicine industry	Industrial Zone-6th Oct.
<b>Health care:</b>	
• Misr International Hospital	Dokki - Giza
• Cairo specialized Hospital	Roxi - Cairo
• Mansoura Medical Centre	Mansoura

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## Boosting Saudi-Egyptian ties

PREPARATIONS in Egypt and Saudi Arabia are currently underway to boost cooperation between the two countries in a variety of fields as Cairo prepares to host the Egyptian-Saudi Higher Cooperative Council, headed by Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa and the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Faisal. The meeting, which will take place during the forthcoming month, will deal with a number of topics reflecting the depth of the relationship between the two countries.

The Egyptian ambassador to Riyadh, Mohamed Kamal Amr, stated that it is expected that the volume of Saudi investments in Egypt will increase with regards to the private sector, especially in areas where Saudi Arabia is able to bring its technical know-how into use, with emphasis on land reclamation projects, including agricultural and irrigation equipment. The past period witnessed the convening of a meeting among

private sector representatives of the two countries, in which a number of Egyptians expressed an interest in investing in Saudi Arabia. This is a phenomena which will widen and increase the economic relationship.

The council will seek to increase commercial exchange by emptying some goods from duty.

The Egyptian ambassador said that the committee will also examine problems faced by Egyptian workers in Saudi Arabia. Like-

wise, increasing Saudi tourism to Egypt will also be a topic of discussion. The ambassador said that Egypt is preparing as many airplane seats as it can in preparation for the summer tourist season.

Finally, the committee will explore means of increasing cultural exchanges between the two countries in the forthcoming period, including painting and theatre, as well as exchange trips between youth and scientific organisations.

## Top speakers confirmed for IAA 35th World Advertising Congress

LEADING figures in global marketing communications will address the International Advertising Association's (IAA) 35th World Congress, "Visions: Communicating with Consumers in a Multimedia World", June 9-12 1996 at the Korea Exhibition Center in Seoul, Korea. The event will focus on three major areas with a full day devoted to each.

The IAA's global network comprises more than 3600 members in 89 countries worldwide. It has also NGO consultative status with UNESCO and other UN agencies.

As is the practice that the host country of the succeeding IAA Congress hold a gala night to welcome and invite attendees to the coming congress, Egypt, host of the IAA 1998 Congress, will hold a gala night with an Egyptian oriental character under the name "Egyptian Night" on the congress' last day.

KING Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, inaugurated the 21st annual meeting of the General Arab Insurance Federation at the Royal Conference Halls in Amman, held this past week from 14-16 May 1996, under the supervision of the Jordanian Insurance Companies Federation.

Kheiry Salim, vice-president of the Egyptian Insurance Supervisory Organisation, said over 190 members of the federation, made up of representatives of in-

surance and re-insurance companies from all over the Arab world attended the conference, including an Egyptian delegation of heads of all Egyptian insurance companies, the head of the Egyptian Insurance and Re-Insurance Company, and the vice-president of the Egyptian Insurance Supervisory Organisation. Attending the conference for the first time were delegations from Palestinian insurance companies.

The conference held a number of technical workshops and sub-

## New companies established

THE COMPANIES Committee at the Ministry of Economy, headed by Ahmed Fouad Atta, first under-secretary at the Ministry of Economy, approved the establishment of 17 companies, 10 of which are joint stock ventures whose total capital amounts to LE837,500mn. Seven of these companies are with limited liabilities, the capital of which amounts to LE451,000. Eight companies are headquartered in Cairo, six in Giza, two in 6th of October City and 10 in 10th of Ramadan City.

Four companies operate in commerce, three in contracting, four in services and one company in the field of tourism.

## Insurance conference held

committees, dealing with a variety of topics including: life, automobile, office, airline and sea insurance.

The General Arab Insurance Federation was founded in Cairo in 1964, with the aim of promoting ties and stronger relations among Arab insurance companies and organisations. The general meeting of the federation is held once every two years in one of the nations of the federation's membership. The Cairo meeting was held in 1990.

## Business news

### Developing Africa

UNITED Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali opened a meeting for heads of UN agencies that took place in Nairobi. The meeting is aimed at finding means of enhancing development in the African continent.

Ghali stated that his visit coincides with the international plan announced by the IMF and the World Bank to implement a ten-year development plan in Africa which will focus on enhancing managerial skills, education, health care, food and water supplies in the continent inhabited by over 700 million people.

### Industry minister meets with the industries federation

SULEIMAN Rida, minister of industry, held a meeting this past week with members of the board of the Egyptian Industries Federation, focusing on the problems currently facing Egyptian industry and the role of the federation in solving these problems. The meeting also discussed the prospects for the federation's cooperation with other ministries and organisations during the forthcoming period.



## Hariri's charm offensive



As Israeli shells and bombs descended on Lebanon, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri looked for intrepid investors in Europe. **Gamal Nkrumah**, reporting from Brussels, spoke to the Lebanese prime minister

One has to admire the sheer tenacity and business acumen of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. He and a handful of political hangers-on, mostly fellow Lebanese businessmen, trooped into a small room in the Royal Crown Grand Hotel Mercure in the heart of the Belgian capital on Tuesday to speak with a few Brussels-based Arab journalists. Hariri, with a massive stake in Lebanon's reconstruction, came to Brussels to meet the foreign ministers of the European Union's 15 member states who happened to be meeting in Brussels. Hariri had a difficult task, not least because of the European ministers' inability to act as one in key areas of foreign policy — not least in the Middle East.

Hariri, who flew into Brussels from Rome, downplayed Susanna Agnelli's strongly-worded criticism of French efforts to influence the course of events in the Middle East. The outgoing Italian foreign minister, whose tenure of the EU's rotating presidency highlighted the growing rift among European powers' external policies, praised the perseverance of the Lebanese premier and the courage of the Lebanese people. But, she reiterated that France had no business going it alone in Lebanon. Many Europeans feel that the diplomacy that would ensure peace in Lebanon would have to be American — not European.

For his part, an unperturbed Hariri paid tribute to France's readiness to help. Hariri praised the vision of French President Jacques Chirac and welcomed the shuttle diplomacy of France's Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette.

Israel's 1993 severe bombardment of Lebanon was stopped by the Americans — not the Europeans. As embarrassing as it may be, both Hariri and his European hosts were acutely aware of the fact that Washington, and not Brussels, counts the most when it comes to Middle Eastern affairs. In fact, Europe, or shall we say, Paris, is desperately trying to restore the rules of the engagement prescribed by the American Secretary of State Warren Christopher in July 1993 in an understanding that until recently secured relative peace.

Today, the Americans want a far tougher stand on Hezbollah and are tightening the screws on the Shi'a Muslim political organisation that controls eight of the 128 seats in the Lebanese Parliament. Paris, like Hariri and unlike Washington, does not want a revision of Christopher's 1993 rules of engagement. Brussels is not quite sure what it wants. European policy towards Lebanon is not as united as Hariri had hoped.

Emerging from a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Michael Riddick, Hariri played down the fact that British Defence Minister Michael Portillo just happened to be in Israel at the height of Israel's ferocious bombardment of Lebanon last month. The British and the Italians have been the most vociferous in condemning French moves in Lebanon. They also have been the most sensitive to criticisms of America. However, even London and Rome have expressed outrage at the Israeli shelling of Lebanon.

Hariri told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the "relentless Israeli bombardment [of his country] was terrorising the Lebanese public opinion into an anti-peace mood. But we still hope for a just peace settlement. Israeli troops must withdraw unconditionally and unequivocally from every inch of Lebanese territory before peace can be concluded. Only when the Israeli troops withdraw from Lebanon can peace be realised. The entire Lebanese nation — Christian, Muslim and Druze — are united as never before."

He stressed: "Israeli terror tactics have failed to cow the Lebanese into submission." Hariri emphasised that the various confessional communities are determined to pursue the reconstruction of Lebanon.

"Interrupting the Lebanese reconstruction process has been one of the objectives of the Israeli bombardment," he noted. "Israel failed to frighten away investors. Israel failed to destroy the Lebanese national unity. Israel's image abroad has been irreparably damaged," he said.

Hariri made no bones about the fact that the destruction of Lebanese infrastructure was considerable. He disclosed that his government was studying proposals for compensation for the physical damage to property and the loss of lives. "The Israelis must not get away with their heinous acts of terror," he said.

Hariri dismissed suggestions that the ruling Israeli Labour Party was better to deal with than the opposition Likud. "They are all the same," he said. It is for that reason that he was asking European leaders to play a moderating role. The most important task at hand is the reconstruction of his war-torn country, he stressed. But Hariri did not come to Brussels with a big begging bowl, he made clear. He was looking for investors who had faith in Lebanon's future, he said.

If Hariri's recovery plans succeed in attracting European capital, there will be real scope for reconstructing Lebanon, Hariri stressed. But, as observers in Europe point out, there will still be much to do to ensure that the right balance between the natural Lebanese entrepreneurial flair and proper business regulations — more in line with European ways of doing business — is realised.

Hariri said that Lebanon's reconstruction will cost something in the area of \$1 billion annually. At a press conference in Brussels, he spelled out his country's reconstruction requirements. His sums include \$270 million annually for infrastructural development and repair, electricity generation and transport and telecommunication upgrading. Education, health and social welfare services will cost about \$216 million per year, he said, and water, sewage and waste disposal projects will require \$324 million per annum. A further \$150 million a year will go into agricultural and industrial development. Hariri stated.

Hariri did not expect European private interests to foot the entire bill for Lebanon's reconstruction. "I do not want our European friends to bear the brunt of these costs. I shall endeavour to win the support and financial backing of the greatest number of states, financial institutions and businessmen in Europe, North America, the Far East and the Arab world," he said. Hariri left Brussels for what was described by his press aides as "a short private visit to Paris." From Paris, Hariri flew to Abu Dhabi in yet another fund-raising tour that, like his European swing, promises to be anything but ceremonial.

## Three-way summit draws joint strategy

In a long-awaited three-way Arab summit between Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, the leaders of the three nations coordinated a joint strategy for the next round of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. President Hosni Mubarak, with Jordan's King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, reached a unified stand on the future of Jerusalem, which promises to be the most difficult issue to resolve in the final status talks with Israel.

The purpose of the summit was to "reinforce the Palestinian position and the [principles of the] peace process during the final status negotiations", Egyptian officials said.

In a joint statement, the three leaders said that "peace must be based on the respect of the legal, historical and spiritual rights of Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem." Otherwise, any declaration of peace "would remain only hollow words". Jerusalem, the statement continued, was at the heart of the overall Arab-Israeli peace process.

Jerusalem is not only a sticking point between the Palestinians and Israel. It has also been an issue of controversy between Jordan and the Palestinians, who in the past have disagreed on rights over Jerusalem's holy sites, especially after Israel recognised Amman's "historical role" in the holy city in its peace agreement with Jordan in 1994.

In reaction, Arafat insisted that East Jerusalem's future was for the Palestinians to decide, and urged Amman to pledge to surrender its claim on the holy sites to the Palestinians after their final settlement with Israel.

But any disagreement seems to have been resolved, and King Hussein told reporters: "Jerusalem is Arab and God willing, our Palestinian brothers will be able to regain it as a symbol of peace." He described the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship as "sacred" and said he would be "overjoyed" if the holy sites in Jerusalem were in the hands of President Arafat or the Palestinians.

The one-day summit also resulted in the formation of a "permanent coordination mechanism" at the ministerial level, which will coordinate stands for the final status negotiations. "It is concerned with the Palestinian track of the peace process and coordination between the three Arab states," Foreign Minister Amr Mouss



A coordinated stand on the peace process: Mubarak flanked by Hussein and Arafat during the one-day summit in Cairo. photo: Ahmed Afifi

as told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. In addition to the future of Jerusalem, items on the agenda of the final status negotiations include borders, refugees, Jewish settlements and the legal status of the territories. The ministerial mechanism will discuss the same topics.

Final status negotiations, which began in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba on 5 May, are expected to resume after the 29 May general elections in Israel. The leaders said their ministers would remain in constant contact, and that other Arab parties with an interest would be welcome to participate in their dialogue.

Egypt has been pushing for this summit since February because of the effect of the final status talks on the region as a whole. In his opening statements at a joint press conference, Mubarak said that it was expected that problems would arise during the peace process, "but through continual cooperation and coordination, the obstacles can be overcome." He said that the final solution to the Palestinian question lay in the

hands of the Palestinians themselves, and that "we are assisting [them] to achieve a just solution." Arafat said that although many difficulties lay ahead, "with this blessed meeting, we have laid the groundwork to resolve these difficulties in a way which will fulfill the hopes and expectations of our Arab nation."

In an overt demonstration that Palestinian-Jordanian relations were not strained, Arafat praised both Jordan's and Egypt's support, saying that the two nations had "spared no effort" in backing the Palestinians. The Palestinian president denied that he had last month accused Jordan of sheltering the Hamas leaders, who were behind attacks against himself and Israel. Arafat said that he did not "suspect" Jordan of helping Hamas, but that "certain forces in Hamas who are in Jordan have published statements against us. That's all."

King Hussein pledged that he would not allow Jordanian territory to be used for any action

In a concerted show of support for the Palestinians in their final status talks with Israel, a three-way summit was held in Cairo this week to coordinate the Arab stand. **Nevine Khalil** reports

against "Palestine, the PLO or our brother Yasser Arafat". The PLO, he continued, was the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinians. "Any transgression in this area is frankly [crossing] a red line and we will stop it by every means possible."

It was also reported that Jordan's and Egypt's intelligence chiefs, and the chief of security in autonomous Gaza, had met on the sidelines of the summit to coordinate their crackdown on Hamas.

The three leaders will meet again in Jordan in the first week of June, soon after the Israeli elections show who the Palestinians' negotiating partner during the long and complicated final status talks will be.

Asked about the impact of the Israeli elections on the peace process, Mubarak said that the elections were a matter for the Israeli people. "We will deal with whoever the Israeli people choose, whether Labour or Likud, because the cause is just."

## The Arab factor in the Israeli poll

The fact of an Israeli/Palestinian peace process has not only altered the political reality of Palestinians who reside in the West Bank and Gaza. It has had an equally profound impact on the 850,000 Palestinians who live inside Israel as "non-Jewish" citizens of a Jewish state. One effect of the emerging political power of this constituency (representing around 12 per cent of the Israeli electorate) is predicted by Palestinian Member of Knesset (MK) and leader of Israel's Hadash Party, Hashim Mahamid. "Without the Arab vote," he says, "Shimon Peres cannot be elected prime minister."

The Palestinian citizens of Israel (or Israeli Arabs) are the descendants of the 120,000 Palestinians who stayed on the land in 1948 after 750,000 of their compatriots fled or were driven out during the war that gave birth to the Israeli state. Subject to martial law between 1948 and 1966, Israel's Palestinians have been discriminated against in all spheres of Israeli society, most brutally in the areas of land ownership and municipal resources. Since the lifting of martial law, Israel's Palestinians have mobilised around the dual aims of civic equality and national rights and are represented in the Knesset by two main political parties — the Arab Democratic Party (ADP) led by former Labour Party MK Abdul-Wahab Darawshe which has two seats

Despite being deprived of civil equality and national rights, Israel's Palestinians are a force to reckon with in the country's forthcoming May general elections, writes **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem

and Hadash which has four.

But political apathy fed by discrimination has been a norm among Israel's Palestinians. In every Knesset election since 1966, only around 68 per cent turned out to vote (considerably less than the Jewish turnout), with, in 1992 elections, 47 per cent voting for Zionist parties rather than Arab lists (like the ADP) or Arab/Jewish lists (like Hadash). The historic beneficiary of this arrangement was Israel's Labour Party, who gained Arabs' support without having to do much to keep it.

With Israel's 14th Knesset elections due on 29 May, this could change. The influence of Israel's Palestinian lobby are expected to have over the peace process is one factor. But there are also internal factors that presage greater Arab representation in Knesset. This may (as in the past) help Shimon Peres' ruling Labour coalition, but such "help" should not be taken for granted.

In March, Israel's Islamist movement decided for the first time to contest the Knesset elections, "not as an independent party," says Islamist movement spokesperson, Ibrahim Sarsour, "but as an independent force within an Arab list" aligned with the ADP. The Islamists are a considerable force among Israeli Arabs, controlling six municipal

councils in Israel. Historically they had opposed participation in the Knesset largely over the ideological difficulty of swearing allegiance to the Jewish state. But the PLO's 1993 peace agreement with Israel followed by Israel's 1994 Peace treaty with Jordan has weakened the hard-liners in the movement. Should the Islamists be able to translate the support they command locally to the national arena, then Palestinian turn-out in the Knesset vote will rise to around 75 per cent.

A like development obtains with Hadash. For the last four years Israel's ex-communists (along with the ADP) have supported the Rabin and Peres governments "from the outside", largely because of the peace process. But, unlike the leftist Zionist bloc Meretz, neither had a formal coalition with Labour nor held any ministerial posts. This has enabled both Hadash and the ADP to oppose Labour when necessary.

In May 1995, the six Hadash/DAP MKs threatened to no confidence the Rabin government should it proceed with its plans to expropriate 139 acres of Palestinian land in occupied East Jerusalem. In the hope of bringing down the government, the rightist Likud opposition lined up with them.

Rabin retreated, "freezing" the expropriations until further notice. In recent weeks, too, it has been Hadash (and not Meretz, or the Jewish dominated Peace Now movement) that has led the domestic opposition to Israel's assault on Lebanon, mounting sizable anti-war demonstrations in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Nazareth.

Both interventions have enhanced Hadash's standing, and not only among Arabs. "I think we will double our Jewish vote in these elections," says Mahamid. "Many Jews now see us as the only left force in Israeli politics, the only left that fights". This could prove accurate. Damaged by its alliance with Labour in government, many analysts predict that Meretz's representation in the elections will fall from 12 seats to six or seven. Most of this support will swing behind Peres, but a sizeable minority will be picked up by Hadash.

Combined with the Islamists' decision to run, such factors are likely to increase Arab mandates in Knesset from six to seven and possibly eight. Add to them the four Arab candidates running with the Labour Party (all of whom are expected to win) and the Palestinian bloc in the 121 member Knesset is formidable, and one Peres will have to take into account. But, warn both

Mahamid and Sarsour, "we are not in his pocket".

On 6 May, Mahamid met with cabinet minister Yossi Beilin, to discuss Hadash's stance vis-à-vis advocating support for Peres in the prime ministerial race against Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu. The meeting took place in the aftermath of Israel's massacre of 107 Lebanese refugees in a UN base on 18 April as well as during the Peres government's now ten-week old closure of the occupied territories. Under such circumstances, Mahamid told Beilin, "we cannot ask our people to vote for Peres. Given the current mood (against Peres) among Israeli Arabs, they would ignore us anyway".

To gain Hadash's support, Peres must lift the closure and redeploy the Israeli army from Hebron, says Mahamid. But more than this Peres "must convince us that there is a real difference between a government led by him and one led by Netanyahu". Such a difference is unlikely to be forthcoming — Israeli government officials have strongly implied that neither the closure nor the situation in Hebron will change much before the elections.

The Islamist/DAP bloc is similarly combative, though for different reasons. "We are attaching no conditions about the peace process to our sup-

port for Peres," says Sarsour, "since Hebron and the closure are issues to be negotiated between Israel and the PLO". For the Islamists/DAP, a vote for Peres hinges on domestic matters, specifically equality in treatment and the return of Islamic Trust institutions and lands confiscated by Israel in 1948.

But the overall aim is a commitment from Peres and Labour that Israeli Arabs become recognised as an integral part of Israel's legislative system and civic society. "Till today," says Sarsour, "the definition of Israel is that it is a state for Jews. And what we seek are articles guaranteeing our presence as a legal national minority in Israel". Constitutionally, this would mean Israel changing its definition from a Jewish state to "a state for Jews and all its inhabitants". Hadash go further. Their ultimate objective, says Mahamid, is the transformation of Israel into "a state for all its citizens", Jewish and Arab alike.

That such issues can be raised and will play a part in the upcoming Israeli elections attests to the political transformations "peace" and the prospect of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza has wrought for Israel's Palestinians. It is a welcome development, says Mahamid. "It has created an internal balance in us. In the future we will act as a bridge between our state, Israel, and the state of our people, Palestine."

## Turkey's water card

Is Turkey selling Syria and Iraq down the river of economic and political gain, wonders **Khaled El-Sergani**

The scarcity of water resources in the Middle East is a time bomb waiting to explode if left unattended. Water disputes have long been recognised as a destabilising factor in the peace process. The Middle East peace process working group on water resources — one of five working groups established after the 1991 Madrid Conference — scheduled a plenary meeting in Tunisia yesterday to improve water management in the region.

The water conflict is not restricted to Israel and the Arabs. Turkish-Arab relations have been adversely affected by the water issue. Turkey, in turn, is inextricably linked to security. Turkey has previously accused Syria, and now Iraq, of assisting and supporting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and has used water as a political bargaining counter.

Countries with rivers that originate outside their borders, like Syria and Iraq, are particularly vulnerable, especially since water supplies are expected to decrease. These countries are threatened by water management policies adopted by countries from where the rivers flow, such as Turkey, which has almost full control over the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Approximately 88 per cent of these two rivers' waters spring from Turkish territory and the rest flows from Syria. Spanning 2,726 km, the Euphrates flows for 900 km in Turkish territories, over 1,000 km in Syria and more than 800 km in Iraq.

So far, Turkey has been reluctant to sign any agreement concerning the distribution of the Euphrates waters with its riparian neighbours. Turkey has argued that the Euphrates' waters that travel within its territories constitute Turkish natural wealth and that its distribution is not

subject to international law. According to Turkey, an agreement with Syria is already in place, whereby the latter receives 500 cubic metres of water per second. But Syria considers the 1987 agreement a temporary arrangement pending a comprehensive settlement between Turkey, Syria and Iraq. The settlement Syria seeks would enable each of the three countries to receive a quota of 666 cubic metres of water per second. This would increase Syria's share to 9.3 billion cubic metres and Iraq's to 12.8 billion cubic metres per year.

In that case, neither Syria nor Iraq would suffer from a scarcity in water supplies for a long time. Iraq's estimated population of 18.5 million consumes about 8.6 billion cubic metres of the Euphrates water. Its population is expected to reach 24 million by the year 2000 and its water needs are expected to reach 10 billion cubic metres, at the very least. Syria's population of 13.7 million, which consumes 4.4 billion cubic metres of water per year, is expected to reach 18 million by the turn of the century. Its water needs will thus increase to 13 billion cubic metres by the year 2000, according to Syrian statistics. Since the Euphrates provides Syria with an average of 80 to 87 per cent of its water needs, Syria will be unable to address the gap between its levels of water production and consumption unless it increases its share of the river's sources.

So far, Turkey has refused to engage in talks unless the negotiations include arrangements for the distribution of the Tigris waters — an issue of mutual concern to Turkey and Iraq, but not to Syria through which the Tigris does not flow. Moreover, Turkey is unwilling to conclude a new water agreement with Syria, presumably

until the Syrian stance vis-à-vis the PKK changes. Another thorny issue is Turkey's dam construction policies which present a danger to Syrian and Iraqi security and may diminish the water supply to those countries.

Turkey's South East Anatolia (GAP) scheme — requiring the construction of 21 dams and 17 power stations on the Tigris and Euphrates — was undertaken to help improve the level of income in the area by directing labour there. Rather than a single project, it is a comprehensive scheme composed of 13 irrigation and energy-generating projects. GAP involves six provinces neighbouring Syria to the south of Turkey, covering 9.5 per cent of Turkish territory and home to 8.5 per cent of its population.

GAP's implementation requires the strict control of the volume of water flowing into Syria and Iraq. During the construction of the Ataturk Dam, Turkey cut the water supply to Syria and Iraq for about one month in 1990, a procedure to be expected at every stage in the implementation of GAP.

The prospect of economic gains and a more prominent political role in the region is another factor driving Turkey to capitalise on its abundance of potable water. Turkey is looking into a "peace pipelines" project. Around 10,000 million cubic metres of water from two Turkish rivers, the Ceyhan and the Seyhan, are usually wasted as they run into the Mediterranean after Turkey gets its requirements. Under this proposed project, water would be discharged through two pipelines running from the two rivers. One would pump some 3.5 million cubic metres of water per day to Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and possibly Israel, at a later stage. The

second pipeline, known as the "gulf line", would pump 2.5 million cubic metres of water per day to Iraq, Kuwait, the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

According to feasibility studies conducted by an American firm, the "peace pipelines" project would be cost effective. Turkey hopes to realise a two billion dollar revenue from its sale of water to the Arab countries, payable in cash, or in return for crude oil and natural gas at preferential prices. Turkey further hopes that such cooperation would attract Arab loans and investments in Turkey's projects and pave the way for Turkish entrepreneurs to obtain a share in construction and building activities in the Arab Gulf.

However, Arab countries see things differently. They fear becoming more dependent than ever on Turkey for their water supply and hesitate to give Turkey such a weapon.

Second, the Arab countries situated at the end of the water pipeline, like Jordan and Saudi Arabia, fear becoming subject to pressure by other Arab countries situated earlier along the line.

Third, there is concern that the water pipelines might become targets of military operations and sabotage, which would gravely hamper the supply of water to these countries, possibly for long stretches of time.

The fourth and perhaps most serious cause of concern is Arab countries' lack of confidence in Turkey's water policy. Their doubts are based on the experiences of Syria and Iraq. Some Arab sources say that Turkey's water policy is the most serious obstacle to sound Arab-Turkish relations.



# Ex-apartheid party bolts

Cock a snook at Congress

On 9 May the National Party (NP), which brought apartheid to South Africa, withdrew from its coalition with the African National Congress (ANC) in President Nelson Mandela's Government of National Unity. The party's decision to pull out came one day after the country's first all-race parliament passed the new constitution by a sweeping majority vote.

Objecting to a constitutional clause which allows a winning party in elections to form a government without the interim constitution's power-sharing requirement, NP leader Frederik W de Klerk explained: "The NP has felt for some time now that our influence within the Government of National Unity has been declining. The ANC is acting more and more as if they no longer need multi-party government."

The Pan-Africanist Congress, on the other hand, rejoiced at the withdrawal, asking the ANC to "rule and legislate in the interests of the oppressed majority, unencumbered by the kind of compromises it had to make in the past."

Beyond the controversy surrounding the new constitution, it is evident that the NP pull-out will not affect the future course of South Africa's economy. Commenting on the issue, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel said that the country's economic programme was not limited to NP policies, but also reflected ANC positions dating back to 1992. "Clearly there will be no fundamental change in economic policy," he said.

De Klerk said that the market would remain stable despite his party's withdrawal. The prominent and widely read *Business Day* shelved the constitution debate, hinting that market considerations were more imperative. "With the constitutional issues now resolved, the focus must turn to effective governance, particularly in the economic sphere. That is South Africa's real crisis," read the paper's editorial.

Yet facing the business of "effective governance" will be problematic for Mandela. In this wealthy country — one of the world's leading producers of diamonds, gold, magnesium and uranium — the black majority is still massively underdeveloped. In a country of 37.7 million, they represent 95 per cent of the 18 million people living below the poverty line. Sixty per cent of blacks survive in conditions of absolute poverty. While blacks make up 64 per cent of the working population, only 15 per cent of them hold professional, semi-professional or technical jobs.

Housing remains a major problem. The bulging shanty towns of Crossroad in Cape Town and Soweto and Alexandra in Johannesburg and, worse, the huge and squalid squatter settlements of Khayelitsha at the Cape or Umhlabini in Durban attest to the crisis. According to South African Development Bank estimates, 40 per cent of the urban popula-

Despite the withdrawal of the National Party from the South African government, the ANC remains largely hand-tied in dealing with the country's major problem — that of alleviating the black majority's poverty, writes Faiza Rady



President Nelson Mandela, jubilant after parliament approved South Africa's new constitution

tion of 22 million have substandard sanitation services — while squatter communities receive no services at all.

Moreover, in the rural areas only 53 per cent of the 16 million people who live there have access to potable water, while 65 per cent are deprived of electricity. For instance, 19,000 — or 86 per cent — of the schools serving rural black communities and 17,000 of the health centres in the same areas have no electricity. The 1991 Urban Foundation Report stated that 11 million rural people lived under the poverty line — many in households headed by single women. In the 1980s infant mortality rates reached 204 per thousand in rural Grahamstown, compared with 27 per thousand in Johannesburg.

Another serious problem concerns water distribution. South Africa, with its vast desert and mountain regions, is a semi-arid country where two-thirds of the land gets only 11 per cent of the rain water. In addition, water management projects, such as dams, and the hydraulic infrastructure were built to accommodate the needs of white housing settlements and agrarian production. Consequently, 60,000 whites hold 87 per cent of the cultivated land and produce 90 per cent of the output.

Although the constitution addresses the agrarian reform question, the planned land confiscation and equitable redistribution projects are problematic — to say the least. So far, white farmers have consistently resisted land confiscation attempts and blacks often lack the property deeds proving original ownership.

Given the appalling conditions facing the majority of South African blacks, many political analysts believed that Nelson Mandela would reform the economy when he assumed power in 1994. In effect, the ANC loosely based its economic programme on the principles of the *Charter of Liberty* — a text coming out of the People's Congress, the impressive democratic

coalition which united the progressive South African political and grassroots movements in 1955. "The natural wealth of our country... will be restituted to its people; mineral wealth, banks and industrial monopolies will become the property of all people; trade and industries will be controlled... and the land will be shared between those who cultivate it so that famine and thirst will be banished from the land," proclaimed the charter.

According to these principles, the ANC was to embark on a vast agrarian and industrial nationalisation plan. Yet its hands have been tied. Foreseeing the inevitability of majority rule in South Africa, the ruling class of the apartheid era had prepared their exit from the political scene by severing the economic system's ties with the executive power.

The white elite had carefully laid out their plans well ahead of time. Although

South Africa traditionally projected the image of economic neo-liberalism, the economy had strong features of state capitalism. Until the early 1980s, the key industries were state-owned, while private enterprise and the markets were subjected to rigorous government regulations and controls. Moreover, the state protected the manufacturing industry affiliated to the mining and energy sectors. At the time, the ANC believed that access to political power would also guarantee them control of the economy.

But the ruling class moved swiftly. At the beginning they transferred large amounts of capital abroad to evade the threat of potential nationalisation or fiscal constraints like progressive taxation of the rich. According to the Central Bank estimates, capital flight reached \$50 billion between 1970 and 1988. Yet this was not sufficient for South African multinationals like Anglo-American and Rembrandt. Fearing the possibility of capital freezes abroad, they camouflaged their holdings by creating European ventures — nominally dissociated from any visible South African affiliation.

While private capital went into hiding, the political elite restructured the system to prevent future governments from affecting economic policies. Economic growth had largely been dependent on massive government investment in public sector enterprises like the electrical company ESKOM or the chemical plant SASOL. To protect these industries from direct ANC interference, the NP initiated their privatisation. Hence state control over these enterprises was effectively minimised. In addition, the NP revamped government departments, making them into agencies and so giving them greater autonomy.

However, the NP's most important accomplishment was to restrict state control over fiscal and monetary policies by institutionalising the Central Bank's independence from the political establishment. Accordingly, the bank was given the leeway to choose its own director and board members, whereas such posts had been filled by presidential appointment under apartheid. Hence, the bank acquired considerable autonomy in fiscal and monetary decision-making — which determines the country's exchange and credit policies. This move further undermined what was left of the government's capacity to reform the economy.

Notwithstanding the real achievement of enshrining self-determination for all people in South Africa's new constitution, the ANC's capacity to change the continuing economic oppression of the black majority remains largely shackled. In the words of political analyst Martin Woolacott: "The ANC will soon squarely face their legacy of vast social dysfunction, grotesque under-education and armed anger."

What did India's Congress Party do wrong, wonders Gamal Nkrumah

Among all that startles, amuses and delights in modern India is the tenacity of the Congress Party. Although the Indian electorate did not vote the party back into office in the general elections held over the last month, voters did not cock a snook at Congress as many had predicted. Still, the Congress Party could not get away with promising the people all the advantages of economic deregulation with none of the drawbacks.

Scandals involving bribery, extortion, embezzlement of public funds and corruption all counted against Congress politicians in the ballot. Another problem was that candidates from the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) managed to exploit the deep frustration of the traditionally economically and socially deprived lower castes of the Hindu social structure and get away with preaching intolerance. Nevertheless, the real result is not so much that Congress lost, but that the poll resulted in the BJP falling over 100 seats short of the 272 required to form the new Indian government.

Looking on the bright side, it is reassuring that Indian democracy works. Congress Party leaders did not quibble over the election results as their counterparts shamelessly do in many less democratic nations of the South. The party was subjected to a humiliating post-mortem even before the final results were out. "We accept defeat. There is no denial of this fact that people have rejected us," conceded Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, the campaign manager for the Congress Party.

Around 90 Indians lost their lives in balloting- and campaign-related violence. It came as no surprise that the largest number of casualties were in the populous and poor northern state of Bihar. It was in Bihar and neighbouring Uttar Pradesh that the BJP scored highest. Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, was the scene of vicious communal rioting in 1992 after the Babri Mosque in the town of Ayodhya was destroyed by BJP supporters and other Hindu militants. The most disquieting characteristic of the BJP's election campaign was that it claimed to represent the silent majority.

Just as Mukherjee was renouncing with Congress Party stalwarts about the poor showing of the party that has ruled India for all but four of the years since the country gained independence from Britain in 1947, another former foreign minister was hedging his bets on being bestowed the Indian premiership. He was the BJP's choice for prime minister: Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

It would be somewhat odd if Vajpayee, a silver-haired septuagenarian and poet, succeeds Narasimha Rao as premier. Vajpayee shies away from the militant anti-Muslim and anti-Western rhetoric of his more brazen colleagues in the BJP. He has been a briefly tasteful power when he served as foreign minister in 1977 and 1978. He is an upper-caste proponent of Hinduism, or Hindu chauvinism.

The victory sign is not necessarily for Vajpayee: Congress has as much chance of forming the next government as the BJP if it aligns itself with leftist parties. The fact that the performance of the BJP at the polls fell short of its leaders' expectations did not go unnoticed. Perhaps the people still have reservations about Hinduism. It was a Hindu fanatic who assassinated Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi in 1948. Hinduism was not the only topic under discussion in the \$25,000 polling stations throughout the vast subcontinent. Around one half of the 590 million eligible voters of India took part in the three-round election on 25 April, 2 May and 7 May. Polling was supervised by 4.5 million officials.

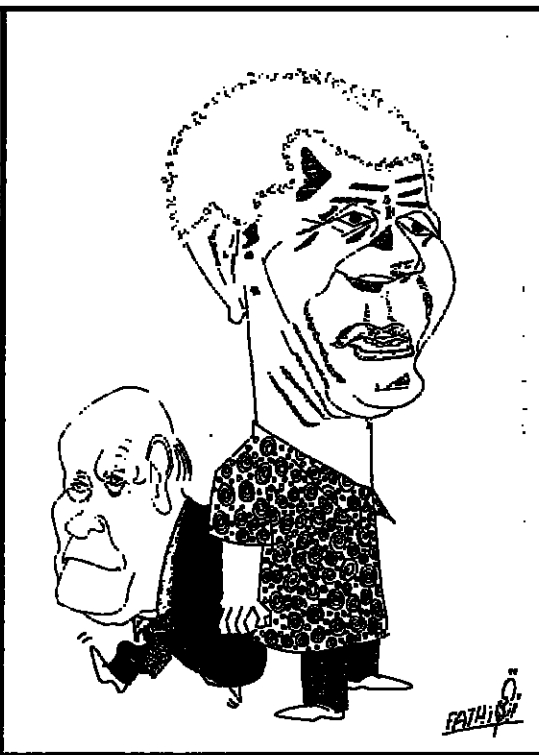
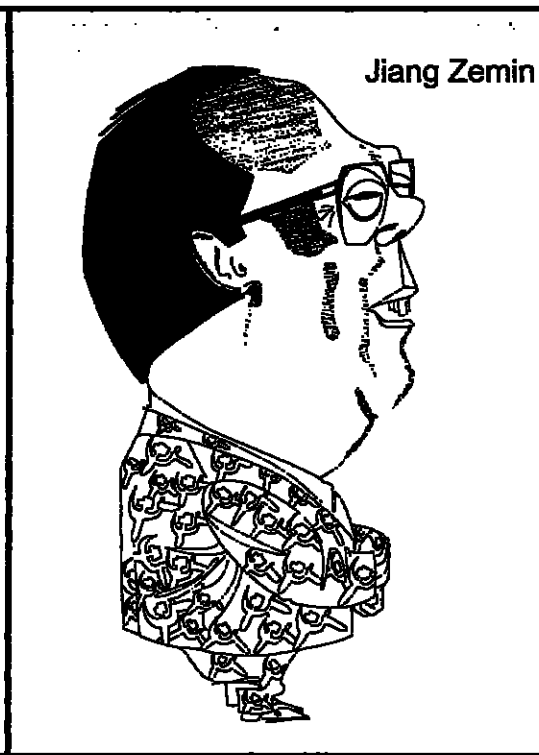
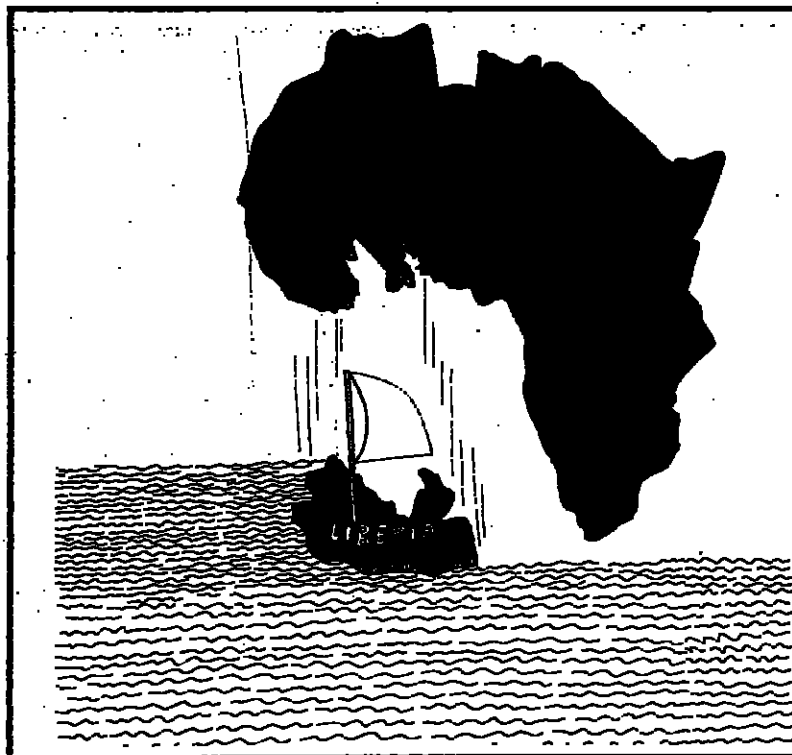
The Congress Party's performance was bad this year, but still considerably better than the 154 seats it won in 1977. This time, at least, most other opposition parties are determined to see to it that the BJP remains out of office. At stake is more than the Congress Party's political future. The point is India's political orientation, especially as far as its foreign policy is concerned.

The BJP advocates nuclear armament for India so that it can match Asia's superpower, China, and neighbouring Pakistan. The BJP also advocates tighter control of foreign investment in India and a curtailment of the special rights enjoyed by India's 150 million-strong Muslim minority.

Like many seasoned politicians battling for a place in history, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, the head of India's caretaker government, was unsure when to step down. When he did announce his resignation, India's President Shankar Dayal Sharma asked him to stay on as caretaker. Rao held on to his parliamentary seat in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, but many of his cabinet ministers lost theirs. To restore the Congress Party's credibility, the party leaders are to regroup and prove that Congress still counts.

The National Front-Left Front coalition of leftist parties, which includes the world's largest communist party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), performed well. The socialist Janata Dal Party and its communist allies held the key to the success of any coalition government. The left has made it abundantly clear that under no circumstances will it support a BJP-led coalition. The left has also indicated that it is not going to tamper too much with the fundamentals of the economic deregulation programme instituted by the Congress Party leaders.

What is even more bizarre is that a host of ex-Congress splinter groups and regional- and caste-based parties hold the balance of power in the 545-seat legislature, the Lok Sabha. Is the BJP then the party of the silent majority? I think not.



## Birth of the rainbow nation

Sophia Christoforakis reviews South Africa's new constitution and talks to Justus de Goede, the new African democracy's ambassador in Cairo

"I come of those who taught me that freedom was a necessary condition for human existence" South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki

South Africa's new constitution, also referred to as the country's new birth certificate, was adopted by the special Constitutional Assembly on 9 May. "It is indeed a historic day, the birthday of the rainbow nation. Today is a day of joy, a day of celebration," said President Nelson Mandela.

The constitution was passed by an overwhelming majority of 421 to two. Some of the political parties noted shortcomings and pledged to challenge them in the constitutional court. The constitution will gradually take effect over the next three years, then come into force with the national elections in 1999.

The constitution's bill of rights has been heralded as one of the most liberal in the world, bearing many similarities to the freedom charter of the African National Congress (ANC). The bill enshrines affirmative action with regard to gender, race and religion, and a right-to-life clause will most probably do away with the death penalty. But the new constitution is a chiefly welcomed because South Africa is a country where political interests have superseded people's rights: the constitution ensures that human rights will never be breached again.

"And so it has come to pass that South Africa today undergoes her rebirth, cleansed of a horrible past, matured from a tentative beginning, and reaching out to the future with confidence," a jubilant President Mandela told the Constitutional Assembly in Cape Town.

South African parliamentarians have found themselves in states of deadlock on many occasions while drafting the constitution over the last two years. There were three major areas of contention, pertaining to labour relations,

property rights and language instruction. The interim constitution gave employers the right to lock out striking workers from production plants and hire replacements. The new constitution did not abolish this right but put constraints on it.

The second debate involved property rights. The National Party (NP) insisted that a property clause be introduced to the new constitution, regarding this as fundamental to a sound economic system and continued investor confidence. However, the property clause works more to the ANC's advantage, as it addresses their policy of land redistribution. The new clause allows expropriation, with adequate compensation, to safeguard "public interest".

The final area of contention concerned language instruction. The NP campaigned to maintain single-language schools. This would allow the Afrikaners — the white settlers, descendants of the Dutch, who were the principal engineers of apartheid — to run schools that teach only in their own language, Afrikaans. The Afrikaners, who feel particularly threatened by assimilation, fear for the survival of their culture in post-apartheid South Africa. To appease them, an education clause was introduced that confers ethnic groups the right to establish "single-medium" schools.

The more controversial parts of the constitution grant any community sharing a common culture and language the right to self-determination and bestow new powers to the provinces. These two aspects appealed the federalist campaigners — the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the radical right-wing Freedom Front. Although self-determination is guaranteed, there are sufficient checks in the constitution allowing the government to sanction and control secessionist groups.

The senate has been abolished and replaced by a national council of provinces. Using the model of the German upper house, the Bundesrat, the

council will have 90 members, consisting of 10-person delegations from each province. This undoubtedly gives greater power to the provinces in shaping policies, although the IFP believes it will substantially reduce it.

Undoubtedly, the most important change introduced by the new constitution is that the Government of National Unity (GNU) will be annulled and majority rule introduced after the 1999 elections. This motivated the National Party to withdraw from the GNU as of 30 June. "It would be unnatural to continue in the GNU while everybody knows that the principles on which it rests have already been discarded in the new constitution," explained NP leader Frederik W de Klerk. The pull-out signals the break-up of the two-year-old government, and it will be the first time that the NP has not held cabinet positions since the 1920s. The NP will adopt a new role as the main opposition party. According to Mandela, the withdrawal of the NP reflects the fact that South Africa's young democracy has come of age and needs a vigorous opposition unfettered by participation in the executive.

The primary motivation behind the withdrawal is to take advantage of the three years that lie ahead before the 1999 elections to develop a clear alternative identity and platform. According to South African political theorist, Lawrence Schlemmer, the NP had compromised its position through its affiliation with the ANC and moved away from its traditional white right-wing constituency. Its supporters perceived that, as a member of the GNU, the party had made concessions that undermined entrenched white privileges. Meanwhile, the NP has been campaigning to reach a conservative section of the black South African electorate and has ambitions to become the largest party in the country.

Additional reporting by Heba Samir

What are the implications of the National Party's withdrawal from the government?

The external implications are economic. When the National Party announced its resignation last Thursday and the rand took a dive, I predicted that after the weekend the currency markets would calm down again. This is exactly what happened. As far as foreign policy is concerned, I don't think for a moment that there is going to be a change in the priorities of the Government of National Unity, which has been running for two years.

My own view was that the National Party had already decided, in principle, to leave the government anyway. It was just a question of timing and they left it till a moment when the constitution was about to be approved by the constituent assembly.

The National Party's argument against majority rule — which is stipulated in the new constitution — is that South Africa is a complex society requiring some form of coalition. What is your opinion?

I don't agree. None of the party leaders argued seriously against the constitution. Only two members of parliament voted against the constitution and 10 abstained, while everybody else supported it.

I think that the constitution is the real guarantee; the best bet for the protection of minorities and for the protection of social, linguistic and religious rights lies right there in this document, irrespective of what parliament looks like.

I think this is the point everyone is making: that this particular document is going to make sure that no government, however constituted, will be able to override the democratic rights each individual has. This is what makes me so positive about the constitution.

South Africa's new bill of rights is said to be one of the most democratic in the world today. What makes it so special?

I think that one of the most novel aspects of the bill is that it stipulates the protection of socio-economic rights and the protection of property. The other question is that of self-determination.

I accept this being in the constitution because it affects language and it affects customs, and it appears in other constitutions where you have ethnically and religiously diverse societies.

The right-to-life clause is pretty strong and will remove the death penalty. South Africa has been a democracy for but two years. That the new constitution has come so far already is a remarkable achievement.



## Al-Ahram Weekly

### Cairo's message

For probably as long as anyone can remember in the near past, the issue of peace has topped the agenda of discussion in the Middle East's socio-political and economic arenas. Peace has been linked to economic and social development, to promoting inter-Arab cooperation and normalisation of relations between Arab countries and Israel.

But while the Arabs have been pushing for a just and comprehensive end to the long-standing tension between Israel and its neighbours, Israel has simply been pushing. It has waited into Lebanon on more than one occasion, closed off Gaza and the West Bank, slandered and slighted Syria's reluctance to wholeheartedly embrace a biased approach to conflict resolution, demanded changes in the PLO charter and otherwise forced Arafat to one-sidedly prove his commitment to a comprehensive peace.

In short, the only tangible manifestation of its commitment to peace has been the freedom with which it slings the slogans of peace and the nomenclature of normalisation.

However, the tripartite summit between Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority, held in Cairo earlier this week, has left Israel with what should be a clear understanding of the Arab concept of peace. It is a united endeavour — one built upon the principles of understanding, cooperation and compromise, not conditionality as Peres would have the world believe. The main accomplishment of this summit was that Israel will no longer have the chance to employ its divide and conquer strategy of policy manipulation.

The final status negotiations are now under way, and Arafat, backed by King Hussein and President Mubarak is armed, not with rhetoric, but with the strength of his convictions and the knowledge that should peace be finally realised, there will be no losers, only partners. The road to peace is still cluttered by the shattered dreams of thousands. Should Peres, or the winner of the upcoming Israeli general elections, find it within himself to subscribe to this ideology, then, while history may not forget the past, with cooperation and determination, the Arabs and Israelis may.

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# The heady scent of power

The double standards exhibited by the US vis-à-vis Israel and the Arab world are proving dangerously alienating to Arab public opinion, writes **Salah El-Din Hafez**

"May God preserve us from calamity!" This is the call of the street these days that echoes in our public forums, in our mosques and in our churches. And we all know against whom it is directed: America, "our great friend and ally" whose false pretences no longer fool anyone and whose glaringly biased policies have embarrassed its "friends", giving their enemies the excuse to attack them and undermine their policies.

The US these days provides us with the worst possible model imaginable for a super-power that claims it wants to lead the world towards peace and stability. It has given full head to double — if not triple or quadruple — standards in every aspect of its behaviour. What is forbidden to us is perfectly accepted by the US when it comes to Israel. And the result of these multiple standards is that Israel has carte blanche to behave in the most brutal way, carried away by the heady scent of its own, uncontested power.

What is abundantly clear, however, is that the peoples of the Arab World have had it up to here. They are sick and tired of exhortations to patience and forbearance issued by their governments. Their rage can no longer be placated by the shallow excuse that America is passing through a difficult phase at present, that it is election time in the US and that, given the imperatives of the campaign, the US is not to be criticized.

The facts give the lie to such excuses. Israel has always been, and remains close to, America's heart. The US is Israel's nurturing mother, forever protective of its child. But what we see today is a maternal passion beyond all bounds. America's unstinting support of an ever increasingly belligerent Israel has reached an unparalleled level. For the first time an American president has personally visited a field of battle

in order to prove to Israel and the Zionist lobby in the US that he is Israel's champion and most ardent defender. Indeed, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres announced during his recent visit to Washington that he was taken aback by the extent of American magnanimity.

The US must have been surprised by how feebly Arab governments reacted to Israel's savage aggression against civilians in Lebanon. At the same time, it is certainly disturbed by the profound popular anger and frustration against America's favoritism and its blatant support, in word and deed, for Israeli aggression.

Instance after instance of Israel's massacre of Arab civilians betrays the same scenario, from the genocide of women, children and the elderly in Dr Yassin nearly 50 years ago, the murder of school children in Bahar El-Baqer in Egypt, the massacre in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon, to the recent slaughter of innocent civilians in Qana, Lebanon, only a few weeks ago. All of these instances bear testimony to horrendous war crimes, perpetrated with unbridled ferocity, with the tacit sanction of the West and the whole-hearted blessing and support of the US. The concerns voiced by the Arabs are simply written off by the Americans and Israelis, who think it is in the Arab psychological make-up to rant and rave a bit and then calm down.

A calm and cool-headed reading of events makes but one interpretation possible. US policy, concocted by the Clinton administration, which includes 11 Jewish officials, and implemented by Secretary of State Warren Christopher, is plain foolhardy and stupid. If recent developments have demonstrated that Israeli and American concepts of peace, stability and security coincide, they have equally demonstrated that these do not match the perceptions held by

most countries of the Arab world, particularly Egypt and Syria. While this discrepancy has been apparent before, during and after the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, it is clearer than ever in light of Israel's recent assault on Lebanon. Headlines are full of President Hosni Mubarak's fury, President Hafez Al-Assad's condemnation and the European Union's criticism of US-Israeli complicity.

No sooner did the Sharm El-Sheikh summit end than Clinton flew off to Israel to chair a cabinet session. Donning a *yarmulka*, he announced that Israel's security was America's security. And from that day forward the US's coffers and military arsenal were open for Israel. Then the US and Israel signed a defence pact and the US gave the go ahead for the Turkish-Israeli military pact.

What happened next? America sent its secretary of state to negotiate a cease-fire according to Israeli conditions. Headless of the blood of innocent Lebanese, the US blackmailed Syria, ignored Egypt and embarrassed the French foreign minister who had trailed behind Christopher in his shuttle between Tel Aviv and Damascus. The US then blocked a resolution condemning Israel for the Qana massacre, waging an abusive campaign against Boutros Ghali who had promoted the resolution in the face of heavy pressure.

It is against this backdrop that we must examine US-Egyptian relations. Egypt and the US are bound by a network of political, economic and military links. However, this does not imply that our respective interests always coincide. There are radical differences, for instance, in our basic understanding of what constitutes peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Such differences are compounded when America implements policies that violate Egypt's own peace

and security and undermines its regional role.

In Egypt's view the regional security arrangements that resulted from the Peace Makers' conference reflect such glaring American favoritism for Israel and such a disregard for the interests of Egypt and the Arabs that, in effect, they seek to impose an American-backed Israeli hegemony over the region. Naturally, Egypt rejects such a formula out of hand.

While Israel insists on maintaining its nuclear arsenal and America insists on exempting Israel alone out of all countries in the world, from dismantling its nuclear capabilities until the peace treaties in the region are signed, Egypt has led the regional and international campaign to rid the region of weapons of mass destruction. Again American double standards threaten the national security of Egypt and the Arab world.

America seems intent on driving the region back to a climate of polarisation and opposing military alliances. The US-Israeli defence alliance and the Turkish-Israeli military pact can only be interpreted by Egypt and Syria as directed against themselves.

In light of the above, we can only assume that the aim of American policy — with its kid-gloved iron grip — is to pressure Egypt, threatening trouble along its borders while abetting its domestic economic and social problems. Terrorist fronts among the most visible of these problems. Should we be surprised, then, that the leaders of extremism have frequently been courted by American officials? America may hope that Egypt will be too preoccupied in licking its own wounds to be a regional force to be reckoned with. Such hopes, though, are mistaken. If history teaches us anything, it is that excessive pressure precipitates explosions and that tyranny invites the most desperate of responses.

## The threat of water wars

In the light of the UN Secretary-General's warning that wars of the future could well be over water, **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** wonders whether Boutros Ghali's remark can serve as the springboard for a wholly new approach to the peace process

Speaking on a CNN question-and-answer programme aired last week, Boutros Ghali warned that wars of the future are likely to be over water, particularly in the Middle East. In my book, *Peace or Mirage*, published last year, I took this thesis even further, positing that if scarcity of water in the Middle East could spark off wars in future, then, by the same token, ensuring its abundance might well be the key to peace. With the current peace process at a virtual standstill, the time has come to try and envisage alternative formulas by allowing our imagination to break out of the mould of traditional thinking, perhaps even to soar beyond the objective constraints of what is now scientifically possible.

Let us imagine, for example, that much of the Mediterranean Sea can be evaporated and transformed into steam devoid of salt, then stored, after cooling, as potable water in huge reservoirs and used to irrigate the vast Arab deserts. It could be argued that transforming the Mediterranean into what would in essence be another Dead Sea, with its high salinity, would result in severely disrupting the ecological balance throughout the Mediterranean basin. This could be avoided by widening the Straits of Gibraltar and, eventually, the Suez Canal to restore the sea to its original level. As to the source of energy that must be harnessed to carry out evaporation on such a massive scale, solar energy could be the answer. Not only is it safer than nuclear energy, whose dangers have been graphically illustrated by Chernobyl and other similar disasters, but, unlike nuclear energy, its destructive potential is as yet untapped.

According to knowledgeable scientific sources the amount of energy that can be harnessed from the sun us-

ing rows of solar panels strung along the southern rim of the Mediterranean from Sinai to Gibraltar could amount to four times Europe's total consumption of energy today. As matters now stand, however, the desalination of sea water costs the oil-rich Arab desert states \$1 per cubic metre, which is prohibitive for most national budgets. For the project to be economically viable, costs would have to go down at least a thousand-fold. This is not as far-fetched as it seems, considering that computer prototypes can cost 10,000 times the price of their mass-produced commercial counterparts. A radical drop in prices is central to the idea of a desalination project, extending to an entire sea.

There is nothing to say that modern science, which is scoring one breakthrough after another in the field of genetic engineering, is not capable of achieving similar results in the field of ecological engineering. This raises an interesting philosophical question: can Man's successful harnessing of Nature help him overcome his struggle with his fellow-man? In other words, can achievements in the field of ecological engineering help enhance the prospects of social engineering?

For example, the Arab-Israeli conflict is governed to a very great extent by the notion of scarcity, which figures prominently in Israel's calculations, whether when it comes to its expansionism (to counter scarcity of land) or to its foot-dragging on the question of withdrawing from the Golan, Arab Palestine and southern Lebanon (to counter scarcity of water). Scarcity of land and water is also a salient feature of Arab life. Despite vast stretches of desert, the Arabs suffer from a severe shortage of arable land

because of lack of water. When scarcity prevails, the "other" is perceived as an aggressor and this perception will not change as long as scarcity is not replaced by abundance, notably abundance of water, which, thanks to genetic engineering, can transform barren deserts into cultivated fields.

In a practical application of the maxim that necessity is the mother of invention, Israel made significant progress in solar energy technology in a bid to develop an alternative source of energy to petroleum which, between the '73 war and the Madrid conference, proved to be a potent bargaining chip in the hands of the Arabs. Still, Israel's qualitative edge in the field of solar energy is of little effect in the absence of peace with its neighbours, who dispose of the vast expanses of territory required to set up the solar panels by which energy can be harnessed. In those terms, joint Arab-Israeli exploitation of solar energy can become a meaningful example of possible complementarity between Israeli quality (scientific research) and Arab quantity (desert space), instead of having the quality/quantity dichotomy remain, as has often been the case, a reason for friction and conflict.

Indeed, as applied to the issue of solar energy, the dichotomy need not necessarily operate in Israel's favour. For all that it does enjoy an undeniable advantage in this field, it is not the only source of technological know-how, and the Arabs can easily resort to other nations for this, notably the nations of the Far East which, unlike the US and the EU, are neither under pressure from their Jewish lobbies nor stonewalled for past sins. Two possible sources spring to mind here, both with an interest in developing solar energy

(albeit for different reasons), both capable of developing the technological know-how to do so: China, a burgeoning great power which is also suffering from a growing shortage of water, and Japan, an industrial giant whose infrastructure is heavily dependent on Arab oil.

Once the Arabs set up joint desalination projects with Far Eastern partners, the enormous commercial possibilities on offer will not be lost on the West, and we are likely to see many developed Western nations rush to follow suit. This will enable the Arabs to negotiate with Israel from a position of strength, by proving that they can desalinate sea water and reclaim deserts with or without Israel's help. It will also place Israel before a clear choice: either to extend its cooperation to the Arabs on their terms, or confirm once and for all that it is incapable of envisaging peace as a framework for the development of the region as a whole rather than as a mechanism by which to impose its hegemony over its neighbours.

The last time the peace process was threatened with collapse following the Hamas suicide attacks in Israel, the international community, led by the US, moved with alacrity to convene the Sharm El-Sheikh summit in a bid to get it back on track. Perhaps the time has come for another international conference, aimed this time not at salvaging an undeniably shaky process but at laying the groundwork for a genuine peace designed to benefit all the parties involved in the Middle East conflict. To that end, the efforts of the international scientific community must be mobilised to ensure the abundance of water and lay to rest the spectre of future water wars now haunting the region.

### Index of community

By **Naguib Mahfouz**

The alley was the unit from which the old city developed. Nowadays there are streets and squares while the alley has become the province of a particular class. It was not always so.

I grew up in Darb Imruz. It was a typical alley which contained a *raha*, a house for the poor, where each family occupied a room and shared communal facilities. In Darb Imruz the *raha*, was occupied by the family of a soldier, the employee of an electricity company and a blind beggar and his wife.

Opposite the *raha* was the *dawar*, the residence of the Soukharis, one of the most prominent families of the quarter. During Ramadan and on other feasts the gates were opened to the residents of the district to reveal a spacious courtyard with a large *salonnet* and ladies' *haramlek*. The Homossanis were another local family of notables, as were the Bannans, coffee merchants, and the Melkians, well-known rag traders. Darb Imruz was also home to a Turkish family, the Kharbodis.

The *raha* and the *dawar* were the extremes, between which were the houses of the middle classes. The alley was an index of community. The women of the *raha* worked for the families of the *dawar*, and the expenses of any wedding or funeral in the *raha* were met by the notables.

Today I sometimes wonder if people know even the names of their neighbours.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmany.

### Qana fallout

**Al-Ahram:** "Throughout the past weeks, we have urged continuously that the first step in confronting current and future Israeli aggression is to agree on a unified Arab strategy for both peace and deterrence. Otherwise, we will have conceded to an Israeli peace, imposed upon the region, unlimited and unconstrained by a challenging Arab force."

**Al-Mussawar:** "I believe that Boutros Ghali has saved peace by releasing his [Qana] report, for he has renewed our hope in the possibility of the triumph of righteousness, against all pressures. Like Clinton and Peres, he also had up-coming elections, but he would not allow them to blind his vision and lose him the ability to distinguish between right and wrong."

**Al-Akhbar:** "Though the whole world, including UN reports, has condemned Israeli brutality, the American administration, whose spoils Israel is, has raised not even an eyebrow at the flowing blood in Lebanon. Meanwhile, the consciences of some Israeli writers have awakened, publishing articles in the Israeli press exposing the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and its American backing."

**Al-Gomhuri:** "We are still congratulating ourselves on the cease-fire in Lebanon, but this matter has to be studied so that it is not repeated in the future. Lebanon did not declare war on Israel; all it did was demand the application of the UN resolutions that stipulate the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from South Lebanon. But there is a funny and sad formula which says that Israel is protecting its borders — fine, but does not Lebanon have the same right to protect its borders, too?"

**Al-Wafd:** "The United States has robbed Egypt of its leadership role in the Arab world, ever since Egypt fell into the 'peace trap'. The US has marginalised Egypt's role in the Arab world. And when the American administration directed the massacres in south Lebanon it gave no thought to the effect this will have on Egypt, as it witnesses what is taking place and remains silent."

**Al-Ahram:** "Had it not been for the initiative of the British newspaper, *The Independent*, and its Beirut correspondent, Robert Fisk... the real dimensions of this horrible crime [committed by Israel in Qana] would never have been revealed... The committee currently discussing the press law [in Egypt] should have learned a lesson

from this — a lesson on how a strong, independent and free press can play a role in defending people's rights. Had it done so, it would not have expended such time and effort in a relentless effort to silence voices and terrorise journalists."

**Al-Shaab:** "America's pro-Israeli stance is nothing new. What is new is the degree of disregard and contempt to all Arabs shown by the American president. Today, the American president has revealed the truth of the American sentiments which are hostile to the Arabs and Muslims."

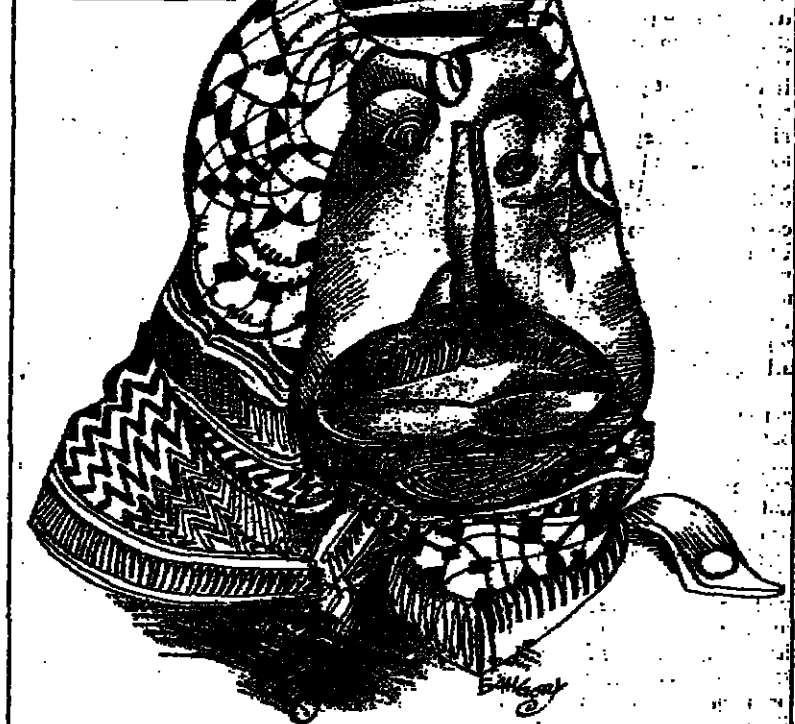
**Al-Ahram:** "Dr Boutros Ghali is to be the first, and the last, Arab United Nations Secretary General. His is a precedent which will never be repeated. The reason, is that both the US and Israel hold Ghali personally accountable for the UN report on the Qana massacre, committed by Israel under the leadership of the war criminal Shimon Peres against civilians in South Lebanon."

**Al-Ahram:** "As for Clinton — Israel's good boy — he has denied the fact that the Qana massacre happened intentionally saying rather it is the result of a 'regretful mistake'."

**Rose El-Youssef:** "With bloody hands, the United States defended Israel which mercilessly slaughtered tens of civilians in the big blood wedding held before the eyes and ears of the UN in Qana."

**Al-Ahram:** "For Clinton to reject any condemnation of Israel means that he has offered his protection for Israeli occupation and expansionism. This is an extremely serious development in the American position. The UN report on the Qana massacre would have been worthwhile had its only benefit been to expose this American position, especially since the ramifications of this position will make themselves felt, possibly in the not to distant future."

**October:** "With unprecedented impudence, Shimon Peres announced that the United Nations is the party responsible for the massacre committed by Israeli forces on 18 April, killing — intentionally and with premeditation — 102 Lebanese civilians. He added — unashamedly — that the UN Emergency Forces shouldn't have sheltered civilians in the Qana UN camp without informing Israel!"



THE clue to Arafat's character, the character of a man who has grown old and seen much, is to be found in the wrinkles that delineate his features. The lines of his face map a lifetime's struggle to achieve a homeland.

In press photographs Arafat often appears laughing, arm raised in salute. I wanted to show him, though, in opposite mood, a little tatty perhaps, with his mouth closed, indicating speechlessness before the seemingly inexorable progress of events. And then, of course, there is his *hattah*, which has become a crowning symbol of Palestinian identity.

لجنة التحرير



## Close up

Salama A. Salama

### Cairo's silver lining

Though the tripartite summit held in Cairo this week eliminated some of the misunderstandings that had clouded Palestinian-Jordanian relations in particular, and inter-Arab relations in general, it was less successful in dispelling the general climate of pessimism that has dogged the peace process since Israel's assault against Lebanon. Such pessimism, compounded by the spineless reaction of the US to Israel's bloody attacks against Lebanese civilians, has deepened with the continuing Israeli blockade in the West Bank and Gaza.

Whilst the leaders of Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority were stressing the importance of a just peace as the only strategic option for all peoples in the region, confirming their desire to resume meaningful negotiations at the earliest moment on all the various tracks, Israeli fighter planes were attacking Hezbollah positions in Ejlat Al-Tufah and flew over Beirut for the first time since the cease-fire agreement.

Though the joint communiqué at the end of the tripartite Cairo summit made no reference to Israel and was silent on the profoundly Israeli bias exhibited by Washington, it served to reiterate the importance that the signatories attach to establishing a just peace, which necessarily involves the renunciation of positions based on expansion, supremacy and domination. Without abandoning such concepts talk about peace will never amount to anything beyond an empty and meaningless rhetoric.

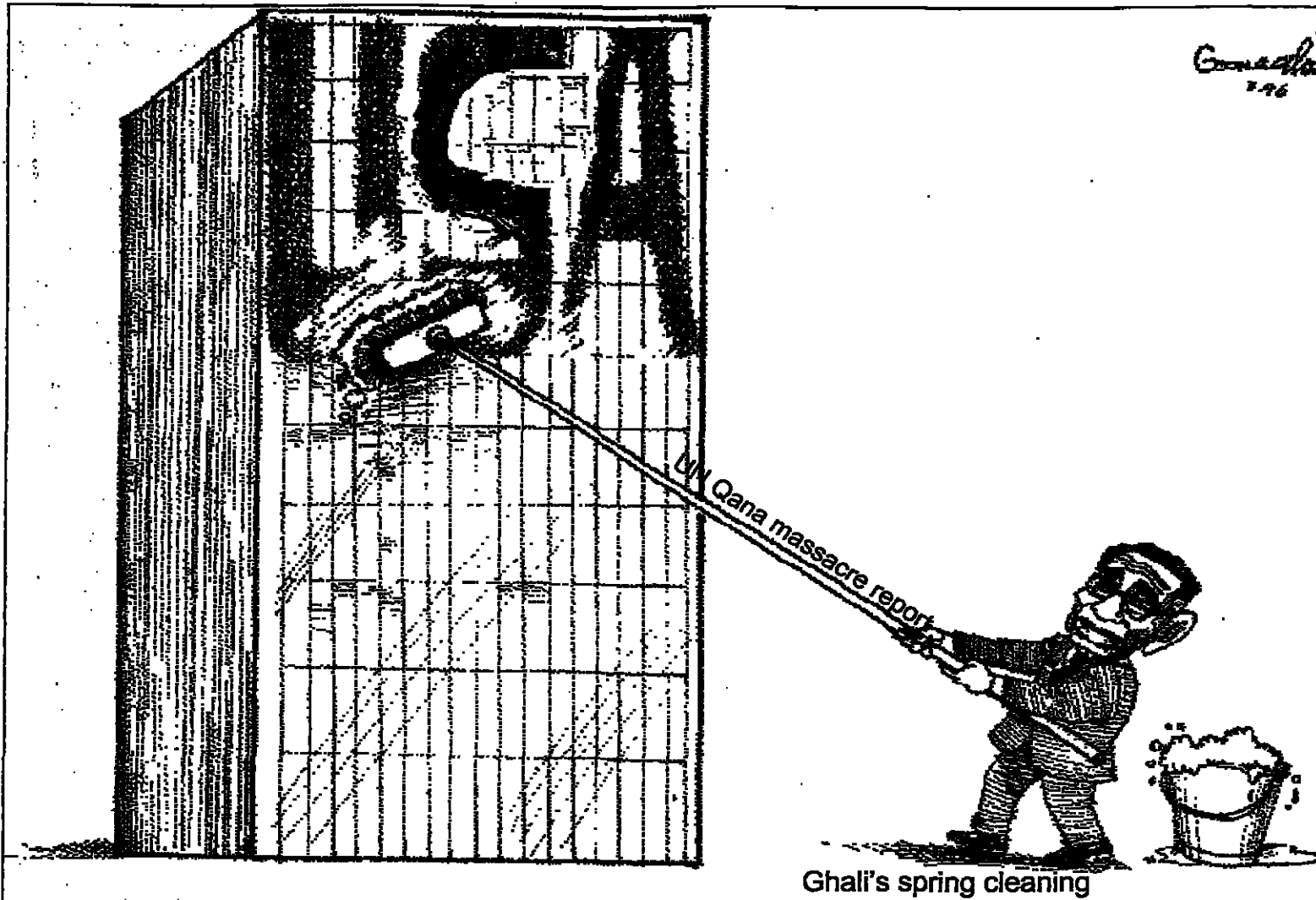
Whether the convening of the summit was a recent decision or whether it pre-dated the Israeli attack on Lebanon, which has had such a detrimental effect on the whole peace process, is unclear. What is apparent, though, is that the summit participants were keen to put recent events in parenthesis as they sought to underline their determination: that negotiations should be resumed at the earliest possible convenience.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the summit, though, has been the realisation that individual efforts to negotiate with Israel have resulted only in a reinforcement of the old Israeli conviction that violence and the use of military force underwrite its own position.

The majority of Israel's gains during negotiations, obtained by dealing separately with each Arab party, came as a result of Israel's determination to capitalise on whatever small differences existed between the various parties with which it was negotiating. Indeed, such was Israel's success in handling these manoeuvres that one Qatari minister was beguiled into announcing that Israel had every right to know in advance what advantages it could expect from peace. Unfortunately the minister in question did not stop to ask himself precisely what sort of peace it was that Israel was hoping to achieve.

In this context the agreement between the participants in the three way summit to develop a mechanism of co-ordination at ministerial level is of significance, since it is only through such co-operation that we will be able to avoid the divisions on which Israel has till now been so keen to capitalise. Such co-ordination, too, should lighten the burden which will be shouldered by the PNA when final phase negotiations begin after the Israeli elections.

The elections are less than two weeks away, a timetable that lends much significance to the next summit meeting, to be convened in Amman early next month.



## Soapbox

### To nurture a seedling

"Why is it that in our country democracy never seems, really, to take root?" Whenever this question is asked the reply is the same. The ruling class, it is always assumed, refuses to allow impartial elections. Truly popular representatives are consequently prevented from coming to power. Yet the standard reply is misleading, if only because it is an oversimplification.

The problems facing democracy in Egypt can be likened to those that might beset a seedling transplanted to the wrong soil. It is common horticultural practice to prepare the soil before transplanting. And just like any gardener we must prepare the soil of Egypt before we can expect the seedling democracy — by which I mean liberal democracy as practiced in Western Europe and the United States — to take root.

Over a century and a half's strenuous efforts directed towards enlightenment have so far been unsuccessful in disseminating the liberal thinking and the fundamental values necessary to democracy. Such values, certainly, have yet to inform the thinking of the grass roots of our society.

Perhaps the top-heavy nature of government in Egypt has mitigated against such a trickle down effect. Certainly since the days of the pharaoh god-kings, Egypt's political culture has been weighted at the top. Social institutions tend to be weak, providing little to counter-balance a leaden bureaucracy. To furnish liberal democracy with an environment in which it can flourish we must engineer a number of basic changes. These are a necessary pre-condition for the holding of free elections and the possible exchange of power that might be consequent upon such elections.

This week's Soapbox speaker is editor-in-chief of Al-Siyasa Al-Dawliya and a member of the Shura Council.



Osama El-Ghazaly Harb

# Adjusting to the real world

Economic reform policies are redistributive by nature, favouring the rich over the poor, argues **Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil**. The alternative: a proper, and democratically formulated, trade-off between considerations of economic efficiency and those of social efficiency

How robust are the institutions of a genuine and evolving civil society? Do the basic mechanisms exist to build a stable public consensus on major issues of development, social progress and foreign policy? In any process of democratic transition these two questions tend to dominate the agenda.

In the Arab world such issues are further complicated by a host of other specific factors, including the dichotomous nature of civil society — i.e. fundamentalists versus non-fundamentalists — and the imposition of economic reforms by international financial institutions (ERSAPs). Problems also arise with regard to the process of peace-making and its implications for security and regional stability.

In discussing issues arising from economic reforms and structural adjustment and their likely impact on long-term economic growth and social equity one must, perforce, deal with contrasting projections, assumptions and data.

In 1989, at a conference of the Institute for International Economics in Washington, the results of reform packages implemented throughout the 1980s in Latin America were analysed. The term "Washington consensus" was coined to describe the conventional wisdom of the day which informed decisions on policy reform, particularly within the US government and international financial institutions.

A leading economist involved in formulating the Washington consensus later wrote: "I tried to describe what was conventionally thought to be wise rather than what I thought wise; that is, it was intended as a positive rather than a normative list." He described not only the reform steps but also the sequence that were, more or less, unanimously recommended by international agencies. Unfortunately, though they might appear at first to be economically sound, the reform packages contained within the Washington consensus often failed to deliver the expected results in terms of growth and equity.

While reform and adjustment strategies may be efficiency-enhancing, uncertainty normally prevails regarding the distribution of gains and losses from reform. There will be those who gain and those who lose, and this simple fact promotes a degree of uncertainty about the prospects of any given individual. The promise of shared growth tends to remain no more than a promise.

Without majority support, reforms may well be short-lived, having fallen casualty to unfulfilled expectations. And if the voters are given a second chance, the electorate are reverse reforms whose gains are concentrated among small sections of the population, though the losses would be more diffuse, as has been shown by the recent experiences of both Poland and Hungary.

More significant still is the fact that, in most cases, people are normally asked to choose between a specific reform (i.e. Fund

and Bank-designed reform packages), and the status quo, when a more proper choice would be between alternative reform packages.

There is a need to endogenise the set of reforms, to remove them from beneath the shadow of international financial organisations and allow policy makers to work out home-grown reform and adjustment packages.

It is remarkable, in this context, to compare the experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia, the only two countries that adjusted without recourse to IMF and World Bank stabilisation and structural adjustment loans, with the experiences of many other adjusting countries. Both Indonesia and Malaysia facilitated a far superior distributional outcome than was the case with countries applying IMF and World Bank packages precisely because they were free to ignore the rigid conditions demanded by the international financial organisations.

Malaysia adjusted more through expenditure switching rather than through expenditure reduction, while in the case of Morocco, capital expenditures on education and health care were slashed by 18 and 36 per cent respectively during its adjustment period (1982-86).

There is, of course, no such thing as universal convergence in matters pertaining to economic reform and adjustment: any consensus on economic correctness does not, in any case, take into account political feasibility. Policy makers, if they are intent on being "economically correct", find they have very little room in which to manoeuvre.

In short, passe partout adjustment programmes will not do. Countries in the Arab region, like countries in other regions, differ widely in their institutional structures and behavioural norms. The apparent long-run "anchor" model of development, the World Bank recently admitted, obtained high-quality growth by an optimal mix of elaborate market incentives and active state interventions. And the quality of the educational system and the institutions in place constitute one of the basic fundamentals for a successful transition from reform to growth.

Arab economies do not suffer from any lack of savings or investible funds. Rather, the problem lies with the very liquid nature of those savings (deposited with the domestic or foreign banks, and invested in government financial instruments). The weak supply responses and the semi-rentier behaviour of private investors (seeking high returns in the shortest possible time), compounded by

the faulty sectoral composition of private investment constitute the main factors underlying the slow down of GDP growth and low employment creation in the Arab region. All these factors contribute to the inefficient pattern of allocation of national savings and to low social productivity of aggregate investment prevalent in the Arab economies.

The decline in the level of public investment in adjusting countries in the Arab region without any compensation to balance the conflicting objectives of efficiency, growth, equity, and political feasibility necessitates an active state rather than one following laissez-faire policies.

The restoration of macroeconomic discipline and the liberalisation of the economy does not in itself guarantee growth in the medium and longer terms. It is usually claimed that successful structural adjustment raises growth in the medium-term, typically after a transitional period of low growth or outright recession. The mechanisms of transition from reform to growth are often neglected, or are simply based on textbook paradigms rather than on the economic realities of individual Arab countries.

Arab countries which suffer from low real GDP growth and high levels of unemployment (especially among educated youth and new entrants into the labour market) do not need short-term stabilisation but, instead, vigorous and high-quality growth. The assumed nexus of linkages and cumulative causalities from macroeconomic stabilisation to growth via the stimulation of foreign and domestic investors, leading to high growth through an upsurge of private sector investment and a reversal of capital flight, may fail to materialise in the absence of an elaborate incentive scheme, active state intervention, and high-quality institutions.

Reform and adjustment policies are redistributive by nature, and lead to socio-economic conflicts of interest. In fact, trade and price reforms typically require large amounts of income redistribution which may not be politically acceptable. Given that political systems possess limited ability to impose dramatic income distributional shifts by democratic means, a trade-off ought to operate between issues of economic efficiency (limiting price distortions and restoring basic macro-balances) and considerations of social efficiency, leading to a more equitable degree of income distribution and greater shared growth.

"The great lack in market theory is its lack of social consciousness. It tends to treat people as abstract economic units. It leaves just-

ice to the indifferent workings of the marketplace, and that is a blind faith." An apt comment by another leading development economist. The social nets designed to mitigate the social costs of adjustment policies as promoted by the IMF and World Bank, apply only in the short term. Future adjustment costs are totally ignored. The clear lack of an equity focus limits the coverage and efficiency of newly-established safety nets such as the Social Fund for Development in Egypt.

Only a comprehensive (and multi-dimensional) anti-poverty strategy could achieve a high measure of social efficiency in Arab societies. Such strategy needs to include three integrated elements: an expansion in productive employment opportunities; improvements in the earnings of the poorest sections of the population; and a will to ensure that basic goods and services remain affordable. The net fiscal impact of such a strategy (i.e. its impact on budget deficits) needs to be carefully weighed against other targets such as political and social stability and not be narrowly guided by economic cost-benefit calculus.

Foreign financial accommodation is very much needed in this respect. Foreign assistance loans and grants are crucial if the delicate balance between economic efficiency and social efficiency is to be managed. But all these measures are short to medium-term solutions, for in the absence of a model of shared growth in the longer term, liberal economic policies will almost certainly lose credibility and, eventually, collapse. Timely foreign aid could only smooth short-term transitional costs of reforms and adjustment (by reducing the political resistance of the most adversely affected groups), but it cannot induce growth effects and sustain liberal economic reforms on borrowed credibility.

Only a systemic approach is capable of seizing the dynamic linkages between economic efficiency, growth, social justice, and political feasibility.

In the Arab world the provision of social services and public amenities (mainly education, primary health care, and public transport) at subsidised and affordable prices has, since the 1950s, been a major source of legitimisation for the state. The more recent evacuation by the state from such spheres, under the pressure of budgetary crises and the new privatisation drive, leads to serious problems vis-à-vis the future balance between the state, the market, and civil society. The provision of public goods and social

services through market mechanisms, at prices out of the reach of 50 per cent of the population has resulted in the evolution of informal health and education delivery systems provided through a network of clinics and schools mainly sponsored by Islamic organisations and agencies.

The failure of the market to satisfy the basic needs of the urban poor at a very elementary level (i.e. inequitable rationing of educational and health services) leads to the decentralised and politically-motivated forms of provision at the community level. These practices contribute, in turn, to a political undermining of the legitimacy of the Arab state, contributing to what might be termed the Robin Hood Effect.

The provision of other social services, which require huge capital outlay — roads, public mass transit — are beyond the financial capabilities of any communal and politically-motivated collective initiatives. The state's failure in these domains will have serious ramifications for both the poor and middle sections of society.

The provision of health and education services, despite their importance for development, constitute a serious burden on government finances in almost all Arab economies, a situation that might be alleviated, at least partly, by an effective and progressive tax system.

The Arab region is currently in the midst of a profound crisis of political legitimisation, rooted in the marked downturn in material conditions. In fact, the socio-economic foundations underpinning the political order in the Arab region throughout the 1970s and 1980s — massive inflows of oil rent, workers' remittances, and foreign aid — are likely to change dramatically in the 1990s, entailing a thorough process of economic and political restructuring and rebalancing.

So far the majority of Arab countries lack any genuine mechanism to build up national consensus on major political and economic issues. With the Arab world's drive towards economic liberalisation an urgent need has arisen to formulate a social contract that will regulate the relationship between labour and capital and reconcile private with social welfare.

The call for a full-fledged national dialogue among Egypt's political groupings and social forces could open the way for a genuine process of national consensus-building. The national dialogue, once begun, could well develop into an all-party national conference leading to a new consensus based on national renewal, socio-political reforms, and a new social pact. Only then will we be able to move away from short-term conflict resolution to the longer-range view of a sustainable consensus-building mechanism.

The writer is a professor of economics at Cairo University.

## Israel's new recipe

By Salah Montasser

Israel has entered the final phase of electoral fever prior to the 29 May elections. These will be quite different from the 31 elections that have been held in Israel since its creation in 1948.

For the first time, a prime minister will be elected on a separate ballot from that of the members of the Knesset, whereas in previous elections the leader of the majority party was the prime minister.

The prime minister-elect must obtain more than half the valid votes. If this figure is not attained, a second ballot must be held 15 days later and the candidate with a simple majority is elected. This procedure is also the case where more than two candidates are running, but in the present elections, restricted to Peres and Netanyahu, it is likely that one of them will win in the first round unless a great number of voters deliberately withhold their votes from both candidates, in which case another round will have to be held.

If this scenario seems implausible, there is another possibility: the prime minister-elect will be unable to form a government if the Knesset elections bring in a party other than that to which he belongs — in other words, if Peres is elected and the Likud gain a majority, or if Netanyahu is elected with a labour majority.

The amended electoral law stipulates that the results must be announced 14 days after the elections are held; the prime minister presents his cabinet to the Knesset and his government's platform within 45 days of the publication of the electoral results. If this is not carried out within the time stipulated, prime ministerial elections are held again. If the same candidate wins again and fails to form a government, he is not allowed to run for election a third time.

This means that the post of prime minister is subject to a parliamentary majority, which can reject a prime minister that belongs to a different party. The amended electoral law, however, also allows the prime minister-elect to dissolve parliament if the parliamentary elections produce a majority in opposition to the prime minister. The dissolution of parliament must be followed by new elections within 60 days, both parliamentary and prime ministerial.

There are those who declare that with this electoral amendment Israel has entered the phase of the "Second Israeli Republic". What is clear, in any case, is that this second republic announces a new phase of instability.

## Reflections By Hani Shukrallah

In 1948, 48 years ago yesterday, Israel was set up. "A land without a people" was handed over to "a people without a land". Western guilt at centuries of persecution and pogroms, culminating in the Nazi holocaust, was exorcised, and Western imperialism acquired its most successful venture ever, one that would reap tremendous dividends not only in terms of the oil-rich, geopolitically vital, Middle East region, but within the heart of the Western world itself.

Since that date, the centuries-long schism between "Christian Western Civilisation" and the "Hebrew race" has been solidly bridged. The Western self is identified in terms of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Jew is no longer a Semitic oriental but the ultimate White Western Man. Photos of fair-haired Uzi-wielding young Israeli soldiers, gazing dreamily into the sky, bring a twinge of excitement to the most anti-Semitic of Western hearts, and "The Jewish state" — notwithstanding nearly a million Palestinian Muslims, Christians and Druze — is ideologically constructed as a Western enclave surrounded by hordes of "others" — others endowed with Semitic noses, dark skins, cunning and vicious ways, and "all that money".

Not only is the "Jewish State" of the West, it has come to be the West in microcosm, a supreme embodiment of Western imperialism — a parable for the West, to borrow loosely from a recent editorial in *The Jerusalem Post*.

Aptly entitled: "Hebron as parable", the editorial states, "The Jewish population of Hebron is small. There are altogether 7,000 Jews living in the city and its Jewish 'suburb' Kiryat Arba, while the Arab population is estimated at anywhere between 80,000 and 120,000.

And if there is one thing about which there is perfect agreement in Israel, it is that if the Jewish population is left unprotected, it will be mercilessly massacred." The editorial goes on to say that "to kill the Jewish residents, Arabs will stab, ambush, throw petrol bombs, run cars off the roads, and use suicide bombers." The implication of course is that Hebron is a parable for Israel, surrounded as it is by millions of blood-thirsty Arabs, who will stab, ambush, etc.

In an adjacent article by the former Israeli defence minister Ariel Sharon, the butcher of Sabra and Shatila also notes the figures for Arabs and Jews in and around Hebron. He goes on to say: "But what matters is not whether there are 400 Jews in Hebron, but the 4,000 years of Jewish history. What other people has such a monument, where the patriarchs and matriarchs of the nation rest in a single place?"

The supreme example of myth as a cornerstone in the construction of a contemporary national and cultural identity, Israel provides the West with a portrait-of-Dorian-Grey-like image of its own founding myths. Its tremendous success story is the ultimate model for the articulation of myth, the dispossession and oppression of "others", and the construction of those "others" as a deadly threat, as a way for creating a mythical identity, cementing it and neutralising the profound contradictions within it.

Thus another *Jerusalem Post* editorial, published at the time of the Hamas/Jihad suicide bombings, can tell us that, "to Westerners", the cause of a movement such as Hamas and Jihad "is monstrous and revolting" and that "what Israel and the Western world are facing is not a

tiny group of bums, but a powerful movement with mass appeal." Bernard Lewis, America's supreme authority on Arabs and Muslims, could write, several years ago, that, "to the modern Western observer, the political role of Islam in the world today appears to be something of an anomaly... anachronistic and indeed absurd."

The great irony in this, of course, is that it makes the fundamental rationale upon which the whole ideology of Zionism is based redundant. The founding fathers of Zionism won their battle against "assimilationist" Jews by asserting the immutable nature of the divide separating the Jews from Western Christian civilisation. It was only with the rise of Nazism that Zionism could be transformed from a minority view among the Jews of Europe into the dominant ideology of the Jewish minorities of the West.

Hook-nosed and vicious hordes we may be, but why all the agony? Since the Jewish state is part of Western civilisation, and since Western civilisation is defined in terms of what Arabs, Muslims and other "Orientals" are not, and since, in the first place, it was Western civilisation that gave rise to the idea of a Jewish state, would it not have made considerably more sense to establish that state in the West? Would not a part of Germany have been, in fact, a more appropriate site for that state, in terms of logistics, civilisational affinity, and not least, justice?

A frivolous thought on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the usurpation of Palestine — the frivolity underlined not just by the march of history, but no less so by the fact that, for the Jewish State to become Western, it had to be planted in the East.



## In a little aspic

FROM THE 19-21 May the Italian Cultural Institute will host a symposium devoted to the preservation of the cultural heritage of both Egypt and Europe. The sessions on Egyptian monuments begin on the afternoon of 20 May, when Shawkhi Nakhl will address the plight of the Sphinx. Sessions continue with discussions of specific restoration projects at Tell El-Amarna, the Elephantine Temple complex and the Luxor temple. While some of the sessions are devoted to technical matters, such as the problems encountered in restoring polychromatic wood, others are of a more general interest, focusing on a variety of architectural styles and questions of conservation, ranging from the preservation of early Islamic architecture to saving twentieth century buildings in Alexandria. Sponsored by the European Union, the seminar will also include an exhibition of photographic images under the title "The Polluted City."



Photo: Abdel-Fattah El

David Blake pays tribute to Geilane Rathle, doyenne of Egypt's voice teachers

## Her halo intact

Halos are very fragile things even if you happen to be an authentic saint. Yet they are better than crowns, if only because they are more secure. Crowns get knocked off the head in revolutions. Halos, never. They can withstand the assassin's bullet and even bad opinion.

It seems Geilane Rathle, who died 12 years ago, was a saint of certain persuasions — of music and of operatic singing. Opera singers themselves are seldom saints. Their tongues are often as strong as their larynxes. But saint you must be to know how to manage opera singers. Great or small they suffer the same *malaise de métier*. How's my voice? Will it stand up to the strain? Is it fading away? Will I be able to use it at 80? Some are able, some are not. It all depends on your character — and your teacher.

This is where Madame Rathle comes in. From the age of five she learned to sing and play piano. She was born in Egypt, of Armenian descent, and quickly grew to attend the Conservatoire Bergrune. She did so well here in Cairo, almost as a prodigy, that she graduated immediately into the Trinity College of London Music Academy here in Egypt. A brief period with her voice professor followed and he told her she was more than ready to make the trip to Italy to study at the all-important Milan Conservatoire of Voice.

But she had a problem. While at the Bergrune College she had fallen in love with and married Fernand Rathle, a young lawyer who was studying the violin and who like her had a voice of quality, a fine tenor. They had two children, Christiane and Claude, the latter now a bass in the Cairo Opera Company.

Geilane Rathle's decision was made, encouraged by her husband, and she went to Milan. Once again, in a very short time, she obtained a diploma in voice training from the Milan Conservatoire. This was more than satis-

fying for a young teacher. Her voice was a rare thing — apparently, in spite of her youth, a genuine dramatic soprano whose repertoire has all the most extensive roles in opera. As well as this voice she had the rare quality of imparting the almost mystical gift of singing to other students. This gift is rarer than having a voice. It is a gift almost of divination and, as they used to say in the 18th century, rare as a blue orchid.

In spite of offers to stay in Italy and join the circuit of opera houses in repertoire roles she preferred to return to Cairo, her hometown, and teach others. But her return was not so much a case of family, friends and Egypt as a desire to teach others, talented as herself, how to use and preserve their precious possession — their voice.

Then began a period of extraordinary activity for Geilane Rathle. These were exciting and turbulent times for Cairo, and a mixture of races were here to blend into alluring voices. Cairo at this time was more than usually a centre of world events and the opera of Ismail was a place of splendour for the display of voices, at this time mostly foreign. Rathle wanted to alter this situation quite seriously. She knew that Egyptian voices were as good as those from abroad and her wish was to display them. She did a magnificent job, and did it virtually alone. Her personality, talent and toughness pulled her through.

Opera houses of the world are united in their endless search for new voices. The Met, New York needs *spinto* sopranos; Berlin, Bayreuth, in fact all Germany cries for voices, especially big Wagnerian ones of any sex; Italy

has voices but no teachers; Covent Garden, London needs anything going. Madame Rathle's heyday spanned the mid- to late-20th century. Even in her time technology was offering everything but the supply of voices, which were dwindling to the present drought conditions. She became a vocal pedagogue, a member of that unique race



Abu Bakr Khairat, Amra Kamel, centre, and professor Geilane Rathle

which consists mostly of women: a sibyl, a muse, an activator, a stimulator, a skin and soul feeder, an angel of support on the battlefields of opera — a deo mother.

Her protective embrace was warm, loving and included a sharp jab to the jaw of any intruder who came to damage her flock. She joined the mysterious priestesses of singing, like Matilde Marchesi and Aglaja Von Orgeni. Her flock were her life and she produced a large one. Hardly a living singer of Cairo has

not learned something from her, and her aid went out to all — grand opera performers, musical comedy performers, pop performers and actors. She loved words bound by tone — not dry words, not stand and deliver tone without words. The latter is called open voice singing and wears the voice. She would not endure wobble or scream or broken registers.

All her singers — one in particular, Rada El-Wakil — show her standards in action. This particular bass shows the importance she placed on noble projection, unburied tone and, best of all, the proper fashion of shaping the mouth: it must always be beautifully formed with no shouting. Geilane Rathle also aided Abdel-Halim Hafiz, maybe showing him how to project and float his tone when, at the end of his life, the voice was beginning to lose some of its power.

She was the centre of a salon in Cairo. Everything operatic passed through her doors. She was welcoming even to pashas and to teenagers searching for knowledge. When the construction of the building of Madinet Al-Fouon by Dr Abu Bakr Khairat was completed, Geilane Rathle became the voice training professor at the first Egyptian Conservatoire. Amra Kamel, Nabila Erwan, Hassan Kamel, Awatef El-Sharqawi, Violette Makar, Youssef El-Zayat and many others are luminaries from the Rathle house of operatic achievement.

She gave to Cairo its moment of great operatic distinction, and her pupils have carried on her work on stage and in class at the present time. She was impressive and must have been lovable. Only very chosen ones receive gratitude for their devotion and high standards in imparting knowledge. Her students and everyone concerned, even peripherally, talk of her caring love. It is the highest praise that can be offered to her.

The group was suddenly into rapid movement. Down by the cow pen the mooing increased. Something was breaking loose. Could it be the minotaur himself?

About now, as *Il Filo* was in its run up to the finish, the gang was hard at it showing some sort of involvement. One solitary girl rushes on stage and executes a phenomenal grande jette across it. She crosses the Gomhouriya stage in about two leaps. A knock down take of something athletic, balletic. She is jumping like hell. After all, as the voice said at the beginning, we've been in hell. But there is nothing like a jumping ballet. There she goes. She is coming again, from another angle. Again, the big jump. This child has escaped from Russia. Her jumps were absolutely marvelous.

And it is over. The scene changes. And on comes — can it be? — Ariadne herself dressed like my great-great-grandmother as Carmen: black gypsy wig, a flamenco shawl around her shoulders, and in a dress. A real lady in a dress. She holds yards of blood-red silk rope and busies herself tying it around the necks of the cast on stage — symbols. It's the thread, Ariadne's thread, and we have come through the ordeal to deliverance.

No more question except where is the cow? Maybe next time the Oggi visits Cairo they can bring Europa and her bull. Something worth waiting for.

## Music

Gruppo Danza Oggi: *Il Filo di Arianna*; Patricia Salvatori, decor and choreography; Cairo Opera House, Gomhouriya Theatre; 11 May

If you are planning on going to Hell this summer, and it is your first visit, then go to Damned Tours Inc Worldwide and get a guide — you'll need one, most probably two — to navigate your way through *Il Filo di Arianna*. In fact, you'll need more than a guide.

Ariadne (Ariadne) is one of the most useful of all Greek myths. She moved almost as quickly as the Gods. In Crete she saved herself and Theseus from the jaws of the minotaur by trailing a thread in and out of the labyrinth. This was a key moment of her life. She sailed away with Theseus to Naxos in the Cyclades, where Theseus promptly dumped her. She remained ever-faithful to the idea of his return. Dionysus came instead, and so she sailed away again, this time to eternal space to become a constellation. She is many operas, ballets, paintings and sculptures, and a good light Beaumont to enrich autumn dinner parties.

Last week she landed in the Gomhouriya, which is where your travel guide and tour operator is needed. Where are we in *Il Filo* at the Gomhouria? A voice tells us before the performance that we will be in the labyrinth of the minotaur. A labyrinth is a place which goes on forever. You can never get out of it without a guide — *Il Filo* (the thread). The labyrinth is Hell — with-

## The mooing of cows

David Blake laments a minotaur

out the escape line, you are done for. Hell enfolds you. Greek mythology spins the best of all stories — clear, a narrative, poetic, quite unfathomable and light of texture though blood-soaked. But Patricia Salvatori manages to cover the elegant, witty and sophisticated myth with a load of half-cooked pasta. Salvatori was on her way when her version of the story began, but the Greek secret of serpentine simplicity totally evades her and she gets lost in her own particular labyrinth.

The opening sequences are repetitive and seem, at least to this spectator, to make no effort to go for the narrative of Ariadne. So we are in the labyrinth. And who are these rather aloof creatures swaying about in semi-darkness in latex costumes and mostly masked? Where is Ariadne, where Theseus and where the minotaur? In tales such as this one there is nothing like the villain; the beast always takes precedence over beauty. In this production of *Il Filo* there is neither beast nor beauty, but people executing very ordinary, very banal choreography, neither damned nor lost.

Some shapes framed in see-through fabrics move around in forms like patients in intensive care units. The colours are often white and the drapes are

like nurses' uniforms in a hospital for the well-behaved but deranged. Nothing ever happens in the dance forms, nothing active or obsessive, nothing to suggest anything at all. Even performed in delicate tasteful lighting, we begin to pine for anything, even the bringing on of a blood-splattered minotaur or Ariadne on the run from a fate worse than death.

During the past few years Cairo has hosted some really splendid dance companies — ballet for short — both classically upright and almost horizontal "dance theatre". Renato Greco from Italy, for example, is one of the best. Feeling romantic? We've had that too, and the dancers are always full of vigor and projectibility.

The Oggi Dance Group has quite a big showing of dancers. They suggested in this production a team of well-behaved, uninvolved and disinterested beings performing by rote a ritual they themselves do not understand. Courty, gracious and stylised — rather like an old-fashioned dress show. Nothing bloody and, even though a few dancers run across the stage wearing blood-stained uniforms, there were no screams of terror from this audience.

An interval might have

helped, but this was not granted. We were meant to feel the onward rush of the drama without interruption. Meaning? There seemed to be none. Labyrinths usually have lost souls moving about — or ladies out for the night caught in ambiguous situations. There were none. It would have been nice to watch a star but the skies were empty.

*Il Filo* was hard on the eye it was better on the ear. There was a sound track of constantly changing effects. There was the sea breaking gently on a beach. The sea becomes a night scene: insects rattle and whisper, birds (lots of birds) make midnight chatter — lovely sub-Messianic voices. If you have lost your child's budget, you might look in at the aviary performing at *Il Filo*. And of course bulls — or cows. Was the minotaur a cow of a man, or had there been transsexual activities in Crete this summer among the hierophantic cattle? We will never know anything. The Oggi Dance Group fudges even the budgeters. Everything seems totally out of touch with everything else.

And the audience? Some loved it, some were in touch with the exit. However, fortunately, there was an audience till the end. As the night progressed, changes began to take

place. The group was suddenly into rapid movement. Down by the cow pen the mooing increased. Something was breaking loose. Could it be the minotaur himself?

About now, as *Il Filo* was in its run up to the finish, the gang was hard at it showing some sort of involvement. One solitary girl rushes on stage and executes a phenomenal grande jette across it. She crosses the Gomhouriya stage in about two leaps. A knock down take of something athletic, balletic. She is jumping like hell. After all, as the voice said at the beginning, we've been in hell. But there is nothing like a jumping ballet. There she goes. She is coming again, from another angle. Again, the big jump. This child has escaped from Russia. Her jumps were absolutely marvelous.

And it is over. The scene changes. And on comes — can it be? — Ariadne herself dressed like my great-great-grandmother as Carmen: black gypsy wig, a flamenco shawl around her shoulders, and in a dress. A real lady in a dress. She holds yards of blood-red silk rope and busies herself tying it around the necks of the cast on stage — symbols. It's the thread, Ariadne's thread, and we have come through the ordeal to deliverance.

No more question except where is the cow? Maybe next time the Oggi visits Cairo they can bring Europa and her bull. Something worth waiting for.

## Listings

### EXHIBITIONS

Georges El-Bahgoury (Paintings)

Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St. Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 11am-5pm. Until 16 May.

Randa Sharrat (Photographs)

Sony Gallery, AUC, Main Campus, El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 11am-5pm. Until 18 May.

Black and white portraits of outstanding individuals captured through the photographer's lens over the years.

The First Spring Exhibition

Dorab Gallery, 4 Latta America St. Downtown. Tel 354 7951. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 20 May.

Crop show including ceramics, sculptures and bas-relief.

Traditional Arts Fair & General Exhibition

El-Ghouri Palace, El-Husseini, Daily 10am-5pm. Until 20 May. Forty Egyptian artists exhibit their work.

La Citra baglameta (Photographs)

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 20 May.

Student Exhibition

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Magdy Abdel-Aziz Kanan (Paintings) & Hassan Osman (Sculptures)

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Sayed Saadeddin (Paintings) & Mohamed Mansour (Sculptures)

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Restoration

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Group Exhibition

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Ingrid Geller (Paintings)

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Coptic Museum

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Islamic Museum

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Mohamed Maktar Museum

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

First Night

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Bad Boys

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

A Walk in The Clouds

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Braveheart

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

The Scholaborsky Brothers

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Galada

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Indian Music Ensemble

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Arabic Music Ensemble

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Jazz Concert

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Children's Choir

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Flute Recital

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Music & Song Recital

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

Brigade Young University Chamber Orchestra

El-Shaikh Rihan St. Tel 377 5456. Daily 10am-5pm. Until 31 May.

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## Around the galleries



Margot Veillon

YOUNG artists, all under 30, exhibit paintings, sculptures, glassworks, ceramics and mosaics at the Society of Fine Arts Gallery. Worth noting is the mosaic tableau depicting *Jellahin*, palm trees and feluccas by Noha El-Sayed Mohamed.

Mashrabiya Gallery shows 45 recent works by George El-Bahgoury. Mostly portraits and street scenes, some of these are inspired by the Fayoum portraits and all show a firm rootedness in the Egyptian artistic tradition.

The First Spring Salon at Dorab Gallery comprises works by 15 artists while "Les Femmes", at the Cairo-Berlin Gallery, is the title under which Margot Veillon is exhibiting her colourful, exuberant and witty portraits of women.

Wikalet Al-Ghouri is given over to a *souk* exhibiting works by 47 artists. In addition to watercolours by Ibrahim Ghazaleh and drawings by Gamil Shafiq — to name but two of the "fine artists" exhibiting — the show comprises works from the applied arts: ceramics from the Said El-Sadry Fustat workshop, arabesque furniture from Bayt Al-Sinait and stained glass.

Reviewed by Nagwa El-Ashri



# A complex web of attitudes

Images of the Other: Europe and the Muslim World before 1700 was the title of a conference held last week by the American University in Cairo. David Blanks gives an overview of the papers presented by scholars from Egypt, France and the United States

The inhabitants of the Mediterranean region today are the beneficiaries of the world's richest cultural heritage. They are also victims. They have suffered terribly as a result of more than 5000 years of intense warfare and oppression brought on by the aggressive clash of competing states and ideologies. It was to examine this long tradition of triumphs and tragedies that this year's Second Annual Conference on Cross-Cultural Encounters was held.

Conference participants were asked to consider past attitudes partly because it was felt that this would shed light on the origins of modern stereotypes. At the same time conference organisers hoped to advance scholarship by re-examining the East-West model, a useful but incomplete history of the appearance of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Hence these lectures also sought to develop a more subtle and complex picture of cultural interaction. Finally, although a great deal has been written recently about Western perceptions of the Orient, far less attention has been given to the Eastern point-of-view; therefore, the third session of this conference was devoted to Islamic images of Europe.

In the keynote address, "Mirror of Chivalry: Salah al-Din in the Medieval European Imagination", Distinguished Visiting Professor John Victor Tolan (University of North Carolina at Greensboro) explained that Western attitudes towards Salah al-Din went through three distinct phases. To the Franks he was the man responsible for retaking Jerusalem and Palestine. Concluding that they had lost the Holy City as a result of their own wickedness, Western Christians portrayed Salah al-Din as an instrument of divine punishment. Yet because he treated the captured Latin leaders with courtesy and generosity, stories of his noble character soon circulated in Europe.

The failure of the Third Crusade led to the second phase in the creation of Salah al-Din's image. How could the flower of medieval chivalry fail to recapture the Holy Land? There had to be an explanation. Once again European chroniclers blamed the Christians themselves, especially their lack of cooperation; at the same time, however, they glorified the enemy as a way of justifying their defeat. No longer the "scourge of the Lord", Salah al-Din was described as "generous, valiant and noble".

The final phase of Western attitudes becomes apparent when the Crusades came to an end. As the legends grew, Salah al-Din was transformed from Europe's most worthy opponent to an exemplar of chivalry, a challenge to the universalist claims of Christian morality. Negative stereotypes of "orientals" were prevalent, but the "oriental other" could also embody Western hopes and dreams.

The keynote address was followed by three papers on Western images of Islam. In the first, Dr. Nabil Matar (Florida Institute of Technology) spoke about "Muslims in Early Modern England", demonstrating that there were hundreds of Muslims from the Ottoman Empire and North Africa in 17th century England. Refugees, former prisoners of war, servants, merchants, pirates, and travellers — Dr. Matar even identified one who seems to have been a lawyer. And then there were the rich and famous. The visit of the Moroccan ambassador in 1637 stunned London and its court. Over one hundred aldermen and citizens accompanied the ambassador in a torchlit procession through the city. Similarly, London elites were delighted by a representative from the Ottoman court who visited in 1640. Still, the discrepancy between these real-life encounters and the image of Moors and Turks remains troublesome. At the end of his talk, Professor

Matar noted that despite first hand experience of Islam, English writers and dramatists continued to stereotype Muslims.

In my paper, entitled "Byzantium and the Muslim World", I analysed Byzantine views of Islam. Compared to northern Europeans the Byzantines had far more contact with their Muslim neighbours and their understanding of Islam was considerably more sophisticated. Like Professor Tolan and Matar, I found that negative stereotypes abounded, especially among Orthodox theologians, but there were positive images as well. Mutual respect is expressed in a medieval epic, *Digenis Akritas*, which means "two-blood border lord". It is the story of a Byzantine princess who marries an Arab emir and gives birth to the hero Basil, a renowned warrior who lives in the Taurus mountains on the border between the Empire and the Caliphate. Like *The Arabian Nights*, this story lacks the ferocious intolerance of the "other" so frequently found in Western literature; indeed, on the whole, the *Digenis Akritas* calls for love and understanding between peoples of different religions but essentially the same culture. In the words of the story-teller: "War in general, or rumour of war, was never known in Basil's day in the least, but everywhere was peace and quietness and all men constantly gave thanks to God."

Dr. John Rodenbeck, Professor of English Literature at AUC, delivered a lecture entitled "Cervantes and Islam: Attitudes towards Islam and Islamic Culture in *Don Quixote*". More than any other Spanish author, Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) is remarkable for his knowledge of Islam. He ought to be: he spent five years as a prisoner of war in Algiers. Dr. Rodenbeck explained that in *Don Quixote* Cervantes exhibited respect for the "other." The Muslims in the "Captivity's Tale" are portrayed sympathetically, and Cervantes' understanding of their faith is noteworthy in an era when the Spanish government was persecuting and expelling Muslims. It is interesting, too, to recall that as a literary device Cervantes ascribed the novel to a Muslim writer whose manuscript he claims to have purchased from a street vendor in Toledo. The phrase "Blessed be Allah!" is repeated throughout the text.

On the second day of the conference, Elizabeth Sertain (AUC), Thabit Abdullah (AUC) and Omayma Abou-Bakr (Cairo University) discussed Islamic images of Europe. Dr. Sertain began with a paper entitled "Medieval Muslim-European Relations: Islamic Juristic Theory and Chancery Practice". From the beginning jurists made a clear distinction between Muslims and *dhimmi* (non-Muslim subjects) and between the *dar al-Islam* (territory of Islam) and the *dar al-harb* (territory of war).



'The Father speaks the Word into the soul, and when the Son is born, each soul becomes Mary' — Rumi, 13th century Muslim mystic. The illustration is for the 11th century Spanish manuscript *Ildefonso's Treatise on the Virginity of Mary*

Dr. Sertain discovered, however, that the ethnic origin of non-Muslims was irrelevant for medieval legal scholars. Similarly, government officials were not particularly curious about peoples who lived outside the *dar al-Islam*. In 1412, for example, al-Qalqashandi wrote a manual for Egyptian bureaucrats that virtually ignores northern Eu-

ropeans. Categories such as "European" or "the West," according to Dr. Sertain, are modern. She found no traces of the image of a collective, hostile European "other."

In his lecture "Arab Views of Northern Europeans in the Middle Ages" Dr. Abdullah agreed that Muslim writers and officials were not generally interested in Europe — the concept of "Europe" did not even exist. Yet by looking at the work of medieval historians and geographers, he was able to uncover negative stereotypes of the "other" that were similar to some misconceptions held by westerners. Because of the cold climate Europeans were thought to be crude, unintelligent, poorly socialised and emotionally insensitive — little better than dumb animals with thin skin and massive muscles. The only qualities admired in the northerners were their fighting skills.

In their comments on these lectures, Dr. Daniel Vitkus (AUC) and Dr. Samia Mehrez (AUC) suggested that the East-West dichotomy commonly employed by scholars gets in the way of interpreting cross-cultural encounters. Both called for a new theoretical approach, one that takes into account the complex web of attitudes that existed throughout the Mediterranean world. Dr. Vitkus argued for a "post-Saidian" perspective, neither Orientalist nor anti-Orientalist, a more balanced and less reductionist framework for understanding the rich mixture of cultures that made up the Mediterranean. Dr. Mehrez questioned the very title of the conference, suggesting that sessions devoted to "Western Images of Islamic Culture" and "Islamic Images of Europe" pre-determined the attitudes of both speaker and audience.

The final paper, delivered by Dr. Abou-Bakr, focused on "The Religious Other: Christian Images in Sufi Poetry." Like her colleagues, Dr. Abou-Bakr acknowledged that anti-Christian polemics were common to medieval literature, but went on to demonstrate that Sufism responded positively to Christianity. Focusing on the work of three Sufi poets, Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi, Jalal al-Din Rumi, and Abu al-Hassan al-Shushari, she showed that these mystics shared a belief in the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*). Concluding her lecture, Dr. Abou-Bakr retold one of Rumi's parables. It serves as a fitting summation to the conference: "A teacher asks his squire-eyed student to fetch him a bottle from the next room, but the student returns to inform his master that there are two bottles, while the teacher insists that he should be able to find only one. The student decides to smash one of them so that he can bring to his teacher the one bottle he requested. The two bottles, though, disappear, and he is left with none."

David Blanks is professor of History at the American University in Cairo

## To this people a place for congregation

Excerpts from primary sources quoted at the conference.

■ '(Then) there appeared a man of the Arabs... from Mecca or its neighbourhood, whose name was Muhammad; and he brought back the worshippers of idols to the knowledge of One God, and bade them declare that Muhammad was his apostle; and his nation were circumcised in the flesh, not by the law...' — Benjamin I. Patriarch when Alexandria was captured (mid-7th century), from Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium, Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: 1984)

■ 'In addressing the Byzantine Emperor... the chancery clerk may choose from among such epithets as the Lion... the Pure of Lineage, Heir to the Ancient Caesars, Preserver of the Ways of the Philosophers and Wise Men, Expert in the Matters of his Religion, Just in his Realm, Bastion of Christianity... Defender of Seas and Inlets, King of Kings of the Babylonians, Well-beloved of the Pope, Paragon of Kings and Sultans... and Friend of the Muslims... The Pope of Rome... may be addressed as the Saintly... Exemplar of the Sects of Jesus, He who appoints the Kings of Christianity, Reciter of the Gospels... He who Makes Known what is Light and Illustrious, Friend of Kings and Sultans' — Shihab al-Din Ahmad al-Qalqashandi (1353-1418), *Subh al-Asha fi Sina'at al-Insha*, quoted by Sertain

■ 'Having paid the expenses themselves, the Lord Marshall and the Lord Chamberlain had the servants (of the ambassador from the Ottoman Empire visiting London in 1640) prepare food 'a la Turke', and then the two Lords, along with 'other great lords', had a wonderful

meal with the messenger, 'so unusual a measure and manner'. Englishmen and Turks sat around the same table, with the highest seat reserved for the Chiaus, 'observing their content of appetite'. The Turkish cuisine had arrived in England' — John Finet, 1641, quoted by Matar

■ 'The Universal Soul came into contact with the individual soul... Through that touch on its bosom the soul became pregnant, like Mary, with a heart-begging Messiah... So when the soul has become impregnated by the Soul of soul... the world is impregnated! Then the world gives birth to another world, and displays to this congregated people a place for congregation...' — Jalal al-Din Rumi, 13th century Sufi mystic and Persian poet, *Masnawi*

■ 'With his right hand (Saladin) made the sign of the cross over the water, touching the basin in four places and saying: "so far is it from this place unto this as from this unto this." This he said so that it might not be perceived what he was doing. And then he poured the water upon his head and upon his body, uttering therewithal three words in French, which we understood not; but verily it seemed, inasmuch as I could see, that he baptised himself' — Salah al-Din's fictional uncle in the 13th century *Récits d'un Mendicant de Reims*

■ 'I have never heard a singing more terrible than that of the people of Shalshawi (European city on the Atlantic coast). It is a sound that emerges from their mouths like

the barking of dogs or much worse than that' — Zakariya bin Muhammad al-Qizwini, historian and geographer (d. 1283), *Athar al-Bilad wa Akhbar al-'Ibad*

■ '(Northerners have)... rough manners; their mouths have grown dumb and their tongues have become heavy... (they) are dominated by stupidity, coarseness and savagery and this increases in them as one goes further north' — Abi al-Hassan al-Masudi, Arab historian (d 956), *al-Tamim wa al-Ishraf*

■ 'Better the turban of the Muslim in the midst of Constantinople than the mitre of the Latin' — 15th century Byzantine church official, from David Talbot Rice, *The Byzantines* (New York: 1962)

■ 'One day as I was in the Alcala of Toledo, a boy came up to sell some notebooks and old papers... (the) characters (of) which I recognised as Arabic... I looked about to see if there was any Spanish-speaking Morisco at hand to read them for me, and I had no difficulty in finding such an individual... When I told him what I wanted and put the book in his hands, he opened it in the middle and read a little... When I heard Dulcinea del Toboso named, I was struck with surprise and amazement, for it seemed to me at once that these notebooks contained the history of Don Quixote... I urged him to read the beginning, and he did so, turning the Arabic into Castilian at sight. He told me it meant "History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, written by Cide Hamet Benengeli, an Arab Historian" — Narrator of Cervantes' 1605 novel *Don Quixote*

■ 'My heart... is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christians! And a temple for idols and the pilgrims' Ka'aba and the tables of the Torah, and the book of the Koran! I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take, this is my religion and my faith' — Muhi al-Din Ibn Arabi, 12th-13th century Sufi mystic and Andalusian philosopher, *Tarjuman Al-Ashwaq*



The Triumphant Christian Warrior, illustration for *Gerona Beatus* (975) in Mozarabic style — "mozarab" being the Spanish corruption of the Arabic *mus'arab* used for the Arabized Christians of al-Andalus. "At first glance the rider appears to represent a Muslim warrior... Near Eastern representations of royalty show fluttering scarves attached to diadems, while crescents here used to decorate the harness, had a religious significance. Yet the traditional meaning attached to the iconography of a mounted warrior subduing a serpent could be applied by a Christian painter only to Christian forces" — John Williams, *Early Spanish manuscript illumination* (New York: George Brazillier, 1977) p. 99

## Through a prism darkly

John Victor Tolan, keynote speaker at the conference, speaks with Nur Elmessiri about medieval Europe's images of Islam

John Victor Tolan is the author of *Petrus Alfonsi and his medieval readers*, together with numerous articles on cultural and religious interaction between medieval Christians, Jews and Muslims, and is the editor of *Christian perceptions of Islam in the Middle Ages: A collection of essays*. He is currently working on a book entitled *Saracens: Creation of a polemical image, due to appear in 1997*. Of the preoccupation behind his most recent research, Tolan told the Weekly:

"Edward Said's *Orientalism* is based primarily on the 19th and 20th centuries. The little he has to say about the middle ages is based mostly on Norman Danilevich who did an extremely good job at finding medieval Christian texts that dealt with Islam, of presenting what they said about Islam, but who did so largely out of context. While Said is right in the 19th and 20th centuries to talk about the confrontation or interaction between East and West as one of a technologically, militarily superior West confronting a technologically and militarily inferior East, I think in many ways in the Middle Ages the situation was reversed. On one hand medieval authors were very aware of their cultural debt to the Muslims, on the other there is an intimidation, Muslim world, on the religion and to explain why a need to push away was so intellectually and economically sophisticated. Hence the many hostile legends about Mohamed. There is even a legend,

found in several medieval texts, in which Mohamed was buried in an iron sarcophagus placed in a mosque that had magnets in the ceiling so that the sarcophagus floated in mid-air. Europeans thought that Muslims followed Mohamed because he tricked them with his false miracles."

The conference has been attempting to break down binaries. What do you see to be the main approaches, in their varying degrees, to Islam — even if they all tended to be negative? In other words, what kind of changes do you see across time and place?

"It is hard to make geographical generalisations. It often depends on the context of each author, whether he is trying to include the discussion of Islam in a text used by missionaries, or in a history of the world, and so on. In the 13th century the story of Mohamed's ascension was translated from Arabic, first into Spanish, then into Latin, and from Latin into French, and some scholars say that the story of Mohamed's ascension inspired Dante's *Divine Comedy*. So there is certainly a variation in portrayals of Mohamed. At the same time, in some of the early texts about the First Crusade, in some of the French epics, from the 11th or 12th till the 15th century, the ignorance of Islam is such that people think that Muslims are pagans and Mohamed or Mahomet is the name of a golden idol they worship.

"In Spain you see a distinction between texts written by churchmen, which are going to show at least a certain amount of hostility towards Islam, and the attitudes of your average Christian who was not going to write his ideas down on paper. We have the incident, for example, of the 9th century martyrs movement in Cordova where a number of Christians came forward, vilified Islam publicly, insulted the Prophet, and were put to death for it. A series of 30 or 40 people did the same, actively seeking martyrdom, and were put to death. There are some Latin texts written in defence of these martyrs, implying that they were in fact very unpopular within the Christian community, understandably so because most Christians felt that they had a very good *modus vivendi* within the Muslim community as a tolerated minority. I think what provoked this movement of martyrs was the fear of assimilation. Christians had slowly, gradually, converted to Islam. Some of the authors of these Latin texts defending the martyrs complain that all Christian Spaniards know Arabic poetry but none of them can read Latin anymore. So there is a fear for one's culture, one's religion, one's identity."

There is a sizable minority of Christians in Palestine and in the Arab world at large. In Israel there is a group of people called "Oriental Jews", who are actually Arab Jews.

But in Europe's narrative of its own history, Europe is Christendom. To what extent do you see the desire to believe that Christianity belongs only to Europe and to forget and deny that it came from somewhere else, from where the Muslims currently are and where the Jews were, as part of Europe's identity-formation?

"In the period during the Arab conquests there were already sharp divisions and different groups. Byzantine writers, subjects of an empire crumbling before the Muslim armies, talk about Mohamed as a wild man, a mad man, a heretic. On the other hand Syrian Christians, who had been persecuted by the Byzantines, were very happy to see the Arabs arrive; some of their texts describe Mohamed as a holy man, Islam as another monotheistic faith and the Muslims as brothers. To jump forward to the crusading period, many of the Western Christians coming to the east were in conflict with the Byzantine Empire and with many of the other indigenous Christians. There was the horrible massacre in Jerusalem in 1099 of Muslims, Jews and Eastern Christians between whom little distinction seemed to have been made."

Do you see these simplified categories persisting till today. If so, how?

"The stereotype that the Arab world is violent — witness Western media coverage of the Gulf War —

comes from this long period in which Europe had an inferiority complex towards the Muslim world. As Europe began to colonise parts of the Muslim world from 17th century they brought those stereotypes with them."

Until the 18th century the average European still believed in miracles, an afterlife, in all kinds of things which at a fundamental, epistemological level remain part of the lives of people in the "Third World". Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism — each incorporating a fundamental belief in the sacred — share important common presuppositions. How has the trend towards secularism in Europe affected understandings of Islam?

"I don't think secularism will necessarily improve the vision of Islam. In some cases, prejudices against Islam are part of anti-clerical anti-religious prejudice. I was struck by what happened in France a few years ago. Many Muslim-French girls wanted to wear headscarves to school and were told they could not because it was a religious symbol. France does have a particularly strong anti-clerical tradition, often directed against the Catholic Church, but in this case directed against Islam. It varies from country to country. That's a kind of problem that is much less likely in the US where there is a clear distinction between the private and public spheres."

### Plain Talk

I have just received what I can only describe as a gem of a book: *Fine Arts: A Glossary*, compiled by six researchers from the Faculty of Al-Ahram (literally, "tongues", meaning languages), Ain Shams University. Indeed, this magnificent publication does justice to the role for which the faculty was established: to be a stronghold of a dynamic movement of translation.

The faculty, or school as it was originally called, dates back to the time of Mohamed Ali. Coming to the fore in the wake of the French expedition to Egypt, Mohamed Ali recognised the importance of cultural openness, particularly with Europe. It was thus that he decided to send missions of young Egyptian students to study, in both Italy and France, the sciences needed for modernising the country.

It was on one such mission to France that a young Azharite by the name of Rifa' El-Tahawi went, accompanying the students as *imam* and supervisor. So impressed was he by what he witnessed there, foreseeing its relevance to Egypt, that on his return he founded the Al-Ahram School. In the course Rifa' was ordered by Mohamed Ali to translate, together with his students, a number of important French books. Until the translations were completed, Rifa' and his students led a near monastic existence.

The Alsun can be regarded a pioneering bastion of rigorous translation in Egypt — indeed, in all of the Arab world. Apart from its staple language courses in various "tongues" (English, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, German, Chinese and Slavonic languages, among others) the faculty launched the first post-graduate courses in translation, both written and simultaneous.

This is where the *Glossary* comes in. Part of the translation examination is the preparation of a glossary of words from different disciplines and fields of knowledge. The glossary in hand, a hefty tome devoted to the fine arts, is the work of a number of students supervised by Drs Shebi El-Koni and Abdel-Moneim Hassan.

In the introduction the compilers explain that whereas the term fine arts is traditionally restricted to architecture, painting and sculpture, the glossary takes its cue from modern encyclopaedias in applying the term to encompass music, ballet, opera, design and decorations. The translators' target is to give "the most accurate Arabic equivalent possible for the English terminologies along with detailed explanation to help... in understanding their usages."

The volume includes a number of illustrations wherever necessary. There are appendices, at the end of the book, which provide detailed information on specific works of art, artistic movements and schools. In the appendix on art, we find full but succinct explanations of such schools as abstract expressionism, cubism, constructivism, futurism, to mention but a few.

This glossary is as comprehensive as is humanly possible. You are as likely to find translations for such words as annulet, bantam work and cathead as banjo, bell lyra, carayid and obelisk, violone and quadriga.

There is no doubt that this is a welcome addition to the Egyptian arts library. Though the *Glossary* is published in a rather simple form, I am looking forward to seeing it reissued by one of the leading publishing houses as a contribution to art appreciation.

Mursi Saad El-Din



## The sound of music

TRADITIONALLY opera singers are stout, middle aged ladies whose voice is supposed to make you forget their appearance. There are however more and more exceptions to the rule. Sheryl Pedran is one of them. Young, blond and beautiful, she was born in Chicago where she studied the piano and dancing at an early age, encouraged by her mother who was teaching dancing and music and had put together a little troupe of gifted children. She studied voice and music in college. She was singing in *Solome* when Joann Grillo and Richard Kaness the co-founders of The Ambassadors heard her in Palm Beach. They hired her and she went on tour with them to the Middle East several times. This year The

Ambassadors who have visited Egypt often and are very popular with the young Egyptian and expat public gave an exclusive performance at the Cairo Sheraton. Sheryl sang "Quando m'inna" from *La Bohème*, "To son l'umile anella" from *Adriano Lecocquer*, *arias from Madame Butterfly* and "In questa reggia" from *Turando*. But, says Sheryl, the public really warmed up when we did numbers from popular musicals such as *West Side Story*. "It is the same wherever we go," she says. Musical theatre is a winner everywhere. Sheryl who was looking forward to a full Middle East tour has had to leave for New York to sing next week at Carnegie Hall "Part of the fun, says Sheryl, is travelling with the troupe."

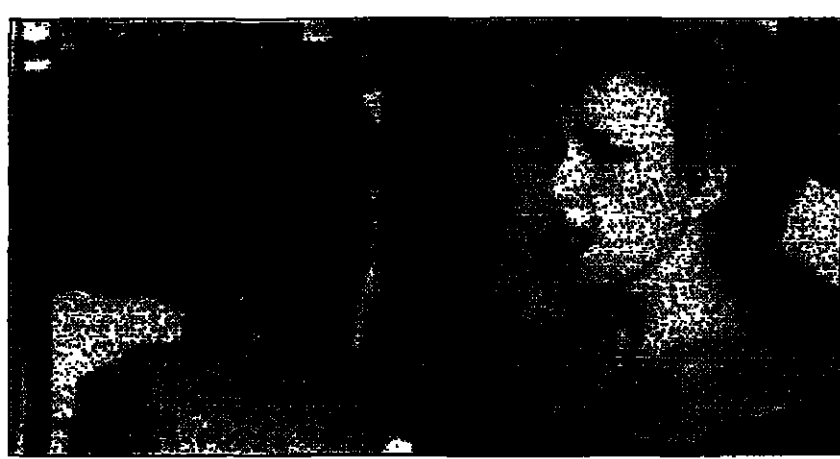


Photo: Life Costantini



## Mulling over malls

"Malls are not just shopping centres," said Walter. "They are a way of life." We were driving past the new mall in Mendi and throngs of youngsters were going into, coming out of or just milling about the hideous, bright yellow edifices. They all looked like mall people, the kind you only see there and nowhere else.

There was a time when the young walked the streets romantically stooped over the piles of books they clutched, clothed in an aura of fashionable angst, playing at being lonely in the crowd. Now it seems that they do the same thing but in groups, and up and down escalators.

One could be led to believe at first that their depressed demeanour is brought about by frustrated consumerism. A second look will inform the observer that they hardly ever glance at the shop windows. They are at the mall to imbibe the gaudy luxury, the loud music, and generally to enjoy the pseudo-carnival atmosphere which permeates the air like the smell of burning hot dogs.

My husband discovered malls when he was in his fifties, and to make up for lost time instantly became a mall freak. There are many historical landmarks we missed in Paris, London, Geneva, Milan, Montreal and Sydney, but we never failed to visit the malls. As far as he was concerned, a day at the mall beat one at the Prado hands down. He wasn't even there on shopping sprees. Actually, he tended to buy locally. But somehow malls beckoned to him wherever we were and he had a knack for discovering new ones no matter how remote and out of the way.

Weekends were often devoted to mall hopping. He would go in and out of shops, noting trivial details that did not have a chance of ever coming in handy. He knew which mall stocked the best brands of orange-flavoured tea (he drank his tea plain); he remembered where one could buy an impressive number of items that no one around us could afford; and he could instantly tell you on which floor of this or that mall you could find men's shoes for over \$500.

He also developed what I have come to call the mall syndrome, a disease which makes one forget the people around one, including one's own family, dragged along on every mall marathon. On one occasion we were driving home with the children when he spotted a sign indicating that a shopping mall could be found in the vicinity. Before I could protest and bring to his attention the fact that the baby was asleep, he had slipped the car neatly into a parking space. "Just two minutes, please. I'll be back before you know it," he said, eyes already glazed.

We sat in the car and waited. I toyed with the idea of driving home but he had the car keys. He also had the money. So I sat and waited... and waited. The baby was hollering, expressing certain precise, pressing needs. It was way past her meal-time. My older daughter did her utmost to drive me crazy. She was hungry, then hungry and tired and finally just tired. Still there was no sign of my husband.

In the end I decided to go look for him. The parking lot was practically deserted. I gathered my two children and headed for the elevator. But search as I may, he was nowhere to be found. I began to look for an attendant, but how would I explain my predicament? It was not unusual to lose a child in a mall, but a husband? "Daddy is late because he went to the pub," my daughter was chanting, spicing some of her more objectionable schoolmates. "Your daddy does not go to the pub," I said sternly. She did not seem convinced.

"Are you and daddy getting a divorce?" she asked. That was too much. I started sobbing. The baby promptly joined in. "I knew it," said my daughter. "All my best friends' parents are divorced." "I was losing it rapidly," I am not getting a divorce, now please be quiet," I finally shrieked. My husband was with us, bearing with pleasure. "Isn't it a wonderful place?" he was saying. "Unfortunately it's almost closing time. I was just looking for the manager to tell him that this place should remain open 24 hours a day. I felt that spoiling his pleasure would be mean, so I followed him in silence to the car. 'Daddy,' asked our daughter in her sweetest manner, 'when you and mummy get a divorce, can I come and live with you here?'"

Fayza Hassan

# Lives at risk

First envisioned in the mid-'80s, the Child Survival Project is committed to reducing child mortality and providing quality health care for children. David Snipes reports

After reviewing a series of reports on the state of health care available for Egyptian children, the Ministry of Health determined that a large proportion of children's deaths and illness were preventable. Ministry officials concluded that expanding already existing programmes, creating new ones and consolidating them into one project was the best solution to upgrading child health care. Representatives of Egypt and the United States met on 15 August, 1985 to sign an agreement establishing the Child Survival Project (CSP) with a ten-year budget. The Egyptian government allotted \$34 million and the US, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), allocated another \$68 million to the project.

Inaugurated in 1988 under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, working in cooperation with USAID and the World Health Organisation, the CSP has overseen a dramatic decrease in preventable deaths while improving the health and quality of life for children.

"The health of children and the leading causes of death were reviewed and identified and we decided to find solutions that best addressed the interests and needs of the Egyptian people," Dr Essam Mansour, executive director of the CSP, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. The leading causes of child mortality were identified as the high incidence of communicable diseases, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea-related diseases from a variety of causes. High birth rates with short intervals between pregnancies coupled with malnutrition aggravate an already high incidence of disease.

Egypt has over 10 million children under the age of six, accounting for nearly 20 per cent of the population. Yet child mortality accounts for 40 per cent of total annual deaths in the country. Approximately 100,000 infants were dying within their first year and a further 500,000 children did not survive to reach their fifth birthday before the CSP began.

Utilising the knowledge gained in their respective fields, the experts at CSP developed a national pro-

gramme targeting specific problems. Departments were set up under the headings Acute Respiratory Illness (ARI), Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI), and Child Spacing and Maternal and Child Health (CS/MCH).

The CSP tapped into the extensive infrastructure of the Ministry of Health's primary health care system to improve the health of Egyptian children and mothers. Upgrading the training of physicians, nurses and district health officers, ensuring adequate drug supplies and technical support are key elements in CSP's national programme.

In recognition of the Child Survival Project's success in the improvement of the health of children and women the Egyptian government has twice been awarded the United Arab Emirates Health Foundation Prize, in 1990 and 1994, presented at the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Geneva headquarters. The prize is awarded to countries in the WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region for achievements in the reduction of health problems.

Egypt, which first won the prize for its successful control of diarrhoeal diseases, received its second in March 1995 for its immunisation programme and its efforts to reduce maternal mortality. While CSP's other two components were well established within the Ministry of Health prior to the project's inception, ARI began operations from scratch within the ministry in 1986. Acute respiratory illnesses, the leading cause of death among children under five, affect 8.5 million children annually. "In 1989 when we began operations at CSP, respiratory illnesses were responsible for 35 per cent of all deaths in one- to five-year-olds, and 33 per cent of all infant mortality," Dr Nagwa Khalaf, executive director of the ARI component of the Child Survival Project told the *Weekly*. "Today, 85 per cent of the population is reached by the ARI programme and these deaths have been reduced to under 30 per cent, but we must still lower these numbers significantly."

Data compiled by ARI researchers have shown that children in urban population areas suffer be-

tween five to eight episodes of respiratory illnesses of varying degrees per year. In rural areas the figure is three to five episodes per year. ARI in Egypt can have dire consequences, according to Dr Khalaf. Bacterial pneumonia is the leading cause of death for children under five — nearly 11 infants out of 1,000 and 4 per 1,000 of one- to five-year-olds died from it in 1990. ARI are estimated, in USAID reports, to contribute to the deaths of 10,000 to 25,000 persons in Cairo alone annually, the highest number seen in any of the world's mega-cities.

Recognising that mothers were the advance line in the detection of illness, ARI conducted ethnographic studies in an effort to better understand how mothers perceived and named the different symptoms of respiratory infections. The results were useful in designing one-on-one and mass media health education. Early recognition and treatment are important factors in preventing illnesses from progressing and becoming life threatening.

Of all children born in Egypt, 70 per cent are delivered at home. Many of these births are attended by *dawas* (midwives). The reasons for the preference for home delivery are multi-fold: local custom, family tradition, distrust in hospitals and clinics, lack of transport and distance are all factors. While most births are without incident, in the cases where complications arise a birth attendant who can recognise early signs is essential to the welfare of both child and mother. A study carried out by CSP entitled the "National Maternal Mortality Study" concluded that 92 per cent of maternal deaths "had one or more avoidable factors." This point is emphasised in the case study of a woman who began hemorrhaging after giving birth. The women was transported, after a delay, to a hospital which, as is often the case, had inadequate blood supplies and the "obstetrician asked the husband to buy two units of blood... the husband searched among many hospitals until he found the correct blood group... when he returned to the hospital his wife had died."

In 1993 the national maternal mortality rate stood at 174 deaths per 100,000 live births. The CS/MCH

component under executive director Mustafa El-Qasas initiated the training of *dawas* in basic health practices as part of the first step to reduce infant and maternal mortality. Over 80 per cent of the countries 15,000 *dawas* have been trained in addition to neonatal nurses, unitologists, primary care doctors and obstetricians. CS/MCH places heavy emphasis on the health of mothers. "The health of the mother is more important than the child," says El-Qasas; "it is she who can best look after the welfare of the child and reduce the likelihood of a difficult birth by seeking antenatal care."

Following World Health Organisation recommended guidelines, developed in the campaign to eradicate smallpox worldwide, the Child Survival Project's EPI component has made significant advances in immunisation coverage. Adhering to the same basic strategy as the other project components — community education, health-care worker training, adequate and quality immunisation supplies and technical support — EPI has reached nearly 90 per cent of the immunisation target, one of the world's highest coverage rates. Hepatitis B, which is responsible for 20,000 deaths annually, is the most recent disease added to the list of six others tackled by EPI. Besides hepatitis B, which in Egypt is primarily acquired in childhood, the programme immunises against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, tuberculosis and polio. "The EPI component has been highly successful, particularly in our goal to eradicate the poliomyelitis virus," said Dr Ahmed Darwish, executive director of EPI. "The number of polio cases has dropped from 120 in 1994 to 16 cases in the first six months of this year."

Though there has been a marked improvement in child health care through the efforts of the Child Survival Project, there remains considerable room for improvement. But with the support of the Egyptian Ministry of Health, WHO, and USAID the staff at CSP and other health-care providers will continue, in the words of Dr Mansour, "to ensure the best future for our children."



Allergic to cats? So what!

Photo: Antoine Albert

## The environment of infertility

Pollution and infertility come hand in hand, especially in developing nations where safeguards take a back seat to industrial growth. Reem Lella looks into the linkages

Water, like air or soil, is a superb medium for the transportation and chemical transformation of pollutants — it even speeds up chemical reactions among dissolved substances, like sewage, industrial waste and acid rain (a mixture of sulphuric and nitric acids).

Both men and women can become infertile within three to five years if they drink polluted water on a daily basis, says Dr Shafika Nasser, professor of Community Medicine at Cairo University. "If the water isn't very polluted, it simply decreases their fertility rate."

When we drink polluted water and these dissolved toxins are ingested into the body, "they interfere with the normal interaction between the brain hypothalamic centres, the pituitary gland and the seminiferous (seed-bearing) tubules inside the testes," says Dr Kamal Zaki, professor of Andrology at Cairo University. "Because these parts are very sensitive and have complicated functions, the final outcome is a severe reduction in sperm density, which leads to infertility."

The journey pollutants take from their source to our bodies is quite straightforward. We inhale them, absorb them through skin contact or more directly, through food and drink. Among the pollutants typical of developing countries are pesticides used in agriculture and industrial waste.

Pollutants might also be self-inflicted, like the kind we inhale when smoking a cigarette. There are over 4,000 compounds present in tobacco smoke, many of which are proven to be toxic and to cause cancer and mutations. "Smoking affects the ovulation of women because it causes vasoconstriction (narrowing) of the ovarian blood vessels, which reduces the ovulation rate. It also reduces the quantity of menstrual blood, which leads to infertility or increased infant mortality," says Dr Nabil Yunis, professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Al-Azhar University.

When pregnant women smoke, their developing embryos are involuntarily

exposed to substances in tobacco smoke. Women who breast-feed and smoke also expose their infants to toxins. "Many of the substances are able to traverse the placenta and reach the fetus," says Dr Mohamed Aboulghar, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Cairo University. "Other substances appear in breast milk." The consequences include stillbirth, miscarriage, premature birth, low birth weight for babies and retarded development.

Radiation is considered one of the most dangerous types of pollutants. Experts say their effect extends to the third generation of those exposed. "X-rays affect the sexual cells of men and women, if they are directly exposed to them. These rays cause vasoconstriction of the ovarian blood vessels and may also cause miscarriage," says Dr Yunis. "These rays also rupture the membrane which leads to difficult deliveries." Electro-magnetic waves emitted by computer screens also affect pregnant women who experience difficult pregnancies. If exposed to the waves for long intervals of time, the probability of miscarriage, breast cancer and disfigurement of the baby is increased, says Yunis.

Infertility is not only spurred by pollutants. There are certain types of hormones, such as estrogen, that are injected into animals for tastier and fattier tissues. "The molecules of estrogen hormones remain inside animal tissues, muscles and organs, which are consumed by man," says Zaki. "Such hormones interfere with the normal physiology of the testes as it causes vasoconstriction of the testes' blood vessels, which leads to infertility or sterility. It also interferes with the normal physiology of brain centers, and the endocrine."

And pollutants can cause health problems other than infertility by affecting numerous organs in the body. Once inhaled and absorbed into the bloodstream, "airborne lead, benzene and carbon monoxide from car exhausts and cigarette smoke cause nervous disorders and kidney damage leading to high blood pressure," says Cairo University's Dr Shafika Nasser.

Sufra Dayma

## Baked kofta and potatoes

**Ingredients:**  
1/2 kg. minced meat  
1 kg. potatoes  
2 onions (one grated + one chopped)  
1 bunch parsley leaves (finely chopped)  
4 tbsp. tomato paste  
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice  
1 beef bouillon cube  
Salt + pepper + allspice + grated nutmeg

**Method:**  
Cost an oven pan with butter, then mix the meat with the grated onion, the parsley, the lemon juice and the spices. Spread this kofta blend in the pan so as to be of one cm. in thickness. In a cooking pan, make a tomato sauce with the chopped onion, the tomato paste, the beef bouillon, some water, then season. In the meantime while it cooks, peel the potatoes, slice them round, then wash them under running water to get rid of the starch. Place them on top of the kofta, then pour over them the tomato sauce, enough to level with the potato slices; (the kofta will release some liquid as well). Cover with aluminium foil and bake in medium oven heat. Remove the foil sheet to golden the top of the pan, 20 minutes before it completely cooks; (do not dry the sauce). Serve hot with white rice and green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

## Starry starry night

Nigel Ryan lunches beneath the midnight blue

The ceiling of Arabesque is painted midnight blue, punctuated by the occasional gold star. There is a marble fountain that gurgles as discreetly as the piano cocktails that trickle from hidden speakers. Arabesque is a very civilized kind of place. The midnight blue and gold may sound a trifle touché. It is not. The interior is almost achingly tasteful. Brocades, *mashrabiyas*, an art gallery for a foyer, and the gentle gurgling.

I like Arabesque. It is cool and uncluttered. It is so middle aged that it makes me feel young. It is proper, with folded napkins and the kind of deferential staff you can imagine turning just a mite snooty if provoked. Neatly tucked away in Qasr El-Nil Street, just a stone's throw from Midan Tahrir, it is the perfect place to escape the hurly burly of the city's pavements. The air conditioning purrs silently at the highest setting, creating a refrigerated oasis in the heart of town. In the evenings it can become crowded though at lunch times it is remarkably peaceful. You will recognise the entrance by its frame of polychromatic tiles.

The menu is a constant. It has been the same now for several years, which suggests less laziness than a recognition of the dangers of meddling with something that has found favour with a great many customers. We began with an order of *mezze* Arabesque, which included stuffed vine leaves, kofta, chicken livers, *sambousak* and goulash of sea bass. The chicken livers were exceptionally good, sautéed until tender and not far from a moment longer. The kofta — tiny balls of minced lamb — was fine. I confess to having reservations about goulash of sea

bass — the idea of producing strips from such a meatily textured fish seems extraordinary though they were perfectly presentable. The *sambousak* were less so. Despite a decently spiced filling, the pastry tasted papery in that underdone filo way.

Entrees proved a little confusing. I had ordered the non too specific *poisson provençal*, my partner the more precise *crevettes et loup de mer bonne femme gratinée*. Only when my fish arrived it was totally un-dressed, boasting a sauce neither from Provence nor anywhere else. My partner had fared better, and got what he ordered.

Now of course, in such a situation the thing to do is to send back the dish. There has simply been a little misunderstanding. And the staff at Arabesque are professional enough not to bat an eyelid. But the fact is that the unadorned fish looked absolutely fine, it came with green rice, and suddenly I realised that was really what I had wanted. So I did not send it back, and thoroughly enjoyed what was later listed on the bill as the equally non specific *poisson grillé*.

The prawns and *loup de mer* were also enjoyable — one of the perks of restaurant reviewing is that you are obliged to pick from the plates of fellow diners and from beneath the slightly heavy sauce I dutifully picked a prawn or two. Fresh and fishy, what more can you ask.

The above, together with two soft drinks and a bottle of mineral water, came to just under LE150. I was tempted to linger over a coffee but did not.

Arabesque, 6, Qasr El-Nil Street, Downtown. Tel: 57 48 677/ 57 47 898

Al-Ahram Weekly

## Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

### ACROSS

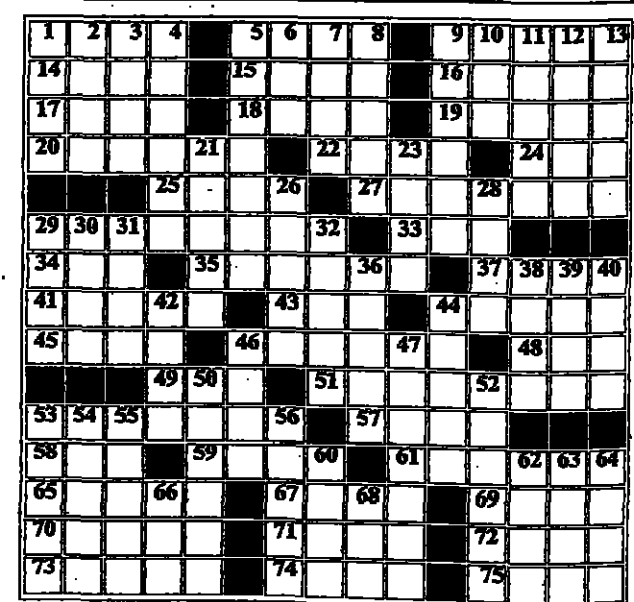
1. Poke; provocative (4)
5. Fixed idea (4)
9. Equine animal, pl. (5)
14. Comb. form for "air" (4)
15. Reverberation (4)
16. hards (5)
17. Praise (4)
18. Poetic contraction (4)
19. ... days = one's time of youth (5)
20. Member of ancient Jewish sect (6)
22. Coavene (4)
24. Itinerary abbreviations (3)
25. Orderly (4)
27. Wife's sibling (7)
29. Stirs (8)
33. Metric unit of square measure (3)
34. Perimeter (3)
35. Enslave (6)
37. Pitcher (4)
41. Conflict (5)
43. After the manner of, 2 wds (3)

AMISS SIGDA TRAP  
EDUCAT AFTER WAD  
ALPHABETIC BEMHONDE  
BRENDS NOSSE EEL  
ARABISTIS ERS  
AIRIL MAIN ASE  
EAM CONG ARVAL  
EENERS EACRAGE  
SIPAKE PALE SAN  
BAR ADO BIRD  
TSP SENTENCE  
REINER BRASID  
ANTHROPOLIS AUBH  
PRIME TROP VEILON  
PRIM SETA PRONG

Last week's solution

44. Angry (5)
45. Ditto (4)
46. Layered (6)
48. Weather directions (3)
49. Biblical high priest (3)
51. Foundation; platform (8)
53. Acrobat's need (7)
57. Upper layer of earth's crust (4)
58. 4 down (3)
59. Accidental small cut (4)
61. African fly (6)
65. Laser (5)
67. Open air public pool (4)
69. Regiment (4)
70. Climbing and twining plant, ex clematis (5)
71. Male ant (4)
72. Mirth (4)
73. Mislays (5)
74. Scores (4)
75. Wapitis (4)

- DOWN**
1. Auction (4)
  2. Garbanzo eat (4)
  3. Bison; wisent (4)
  4. Animal with strong incisors and no canine teeth (5)
  5. In manner unworthy of (7)
  6. Floe (3)
  7. Expression to call attention (4)
  8. Ulcerations; hurts (5)
  9. Esquire (6)
  10. Miscellaneous facts (3)
  11. Principles (5)
  12. Muse of lyric poetry (5)



13. Describing a certain automobile (5)
21. Poetic for 5 Down (5)
23. And others, L. 2 wds (4)
26. Wide-brimmed felt hat worn in sub-tropical regions (5)
28. Equal (4)
29. Bows (4)
30. monster = type of poisonous lizard (4)
31. Muslim caller to prayer (4)
32. Nutritive starch meal (5)
36. Ancient Roman household deities (5)
38. Require (4)
39. Small spirit stove (4)
40. Bobbin (4)
42. Ooze (4)
44. Concepts (5)
46. ...Ouzou, Algeria (4)
47. Redactors (7)
50. Binoculars (6)
52. Small vehicle for sliding down slopes (6)
53. Sting in quavering manner (3)
54. Broadcast (5)
55. A Titan (5)
56. Brilliance (5)
60. Cows (4)
62. Money receptacle behind counter (4)
63. Look around for (4)
64. French summers (4)
66. Weather directions (3)
68. Niche (3)

44/5/5/5/5



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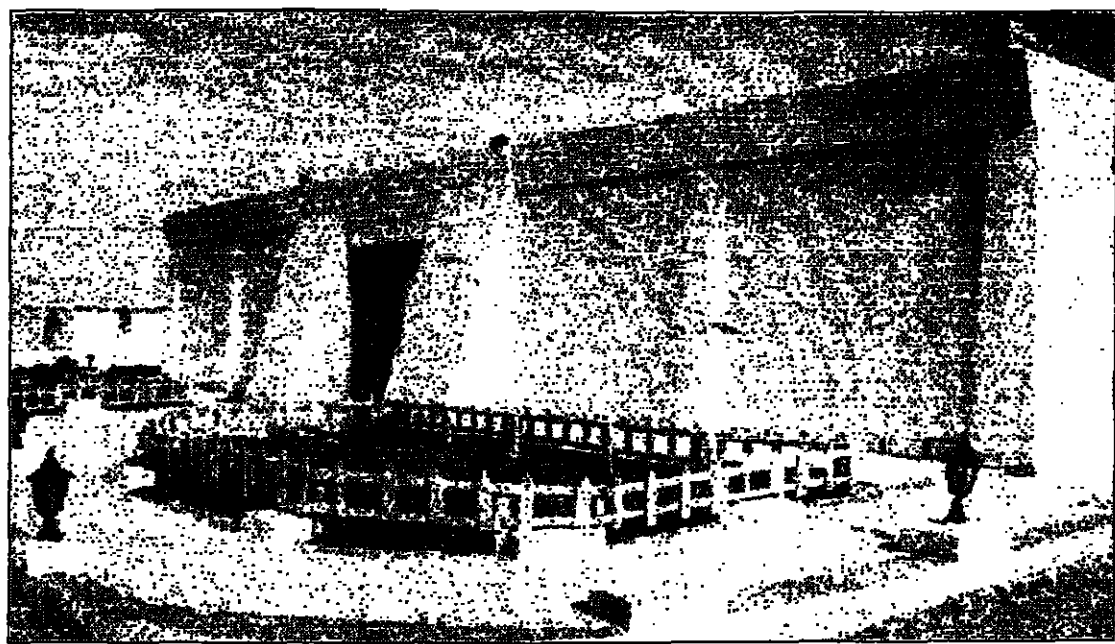
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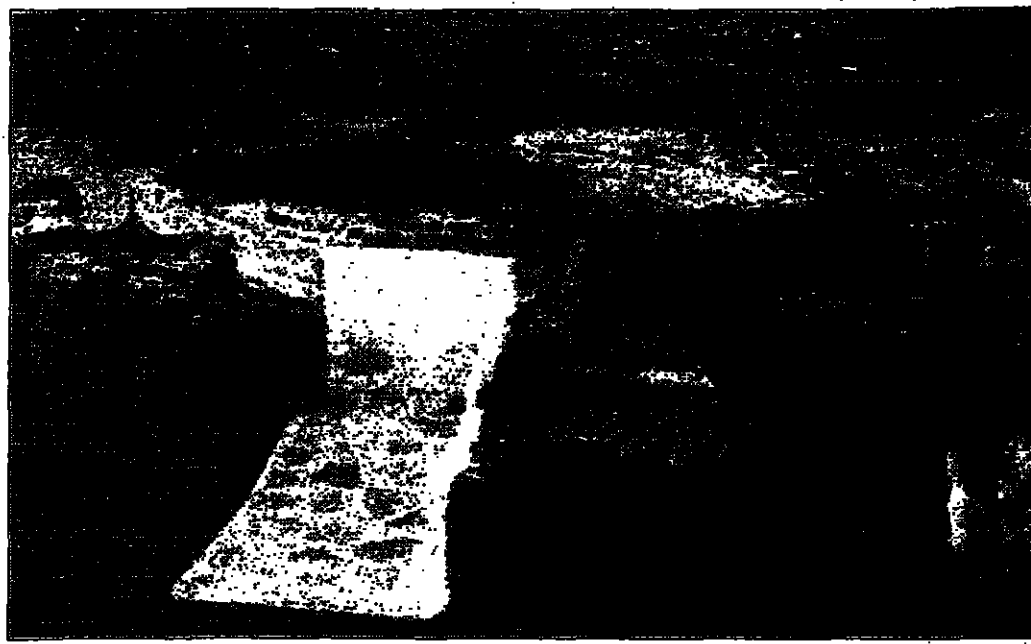
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The new museum at Qantara Sharq



Ruins of the newly-discovered citadel

photos: Ayman Barazi

## Ancient north Sinai uncovered

Northern Sinai has become an archaeological centre. An ancient citadel is the latest in a series of discoveries, and a centre covering the history of the area is to open soon. **Nevine El-Aref** explores

Recent excavations at El-Qantara Sharq in Sinai have unearthed the area's first Ptolemaic monument, a citadel, dating to the age of Ptolemy IV. The impressive structure is 600 metres long, 300 metres wide, with walls 15 metres thick. A cache of 500 bronze coins has been discovered beneath the citadel, together with precious stones, weapons and pottery shards. And in the surrounding area, silos, stables, store rooms, a dormitory for soldiers and houses have been unearthed.

"This is an important discovery," commented Mohamed Abdel-Maqoud, director-general of Sinai antiquities. From the excavations, he added, it could be deduced that the citadel was used as a customs and toll station for the eastern part of the Delta. The structure also reveals new information on Egyptian military architecture and on the history of northern Sinai in general. Three other citadels found in the area date back to the Ptolemaic, Roman and Byzantine periods.

"This latest discovery supports the hypothesis that El-Qantara Sharq was Egypt's eastern gateway to the Delta, and that it played a vital part in commercial and military relations between Egypt and the countries of the eastern Mediterranean," Abdel-Maqoud explained.

The discovery is the latest in an archaeological salvage operation begun over five years ago when work began on the El-Salam Canal project, designed to channel fresh water from the Damietta branch of the Nile under the

Suez Canal to feed a large subsidiary canal running across northern Sinai.

This canal will carry water to irrigate land as far as the plain of El-Arish, and will eventually allow 400,000 feddans to be put under cultivation. The first, and richest, archaeological area it will traverse is that crossing the El-Tina Valley east of El-Qantara and Port Said and extending to the south of Lake Bardawil.

Because the region was largely unexplored, archaeologically speaking, the authorities realised that there was a high risk of losing important parts of the cultural heritage if special action was not taken.

While the government initiated the North Sinai Archaeological Salvage Project, the Ministry of Irrigation cooperated with the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) in the planning of the canal. "To conserve the monuments around Salam Canal from drainage water, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and the Ministry of Irrigation have taken all the necessary precautions, even to the extent of changing the planned route of the canal," Abdel-Maqoud explained.

And, as part of the Sinai Development Project, the SCA is due to open the first educational and scientific institute for the history of north Sinai, the Centre for Sinai Studies.

"The centre will be an important means of making information accessible to scholars, and to the public," said

Abdel-Maqoud. Built in the shape of a Pharaonic temple on an area of 1,500 square metres, the centre, he explained, comprises three buildings. The first is a residential unit for students and lecturers, the second a library containing more than 20,000 archaeological books and documentary films, and the third contains lecture and reception halls. There is also a studio where coloured slides showing the development of ancient Egyptian architecture will be on display.

In addition, the centre will feature a museum of Sinai artefacts, including pottery from different ages and objects excavated during the Israeli occupation and later returned to Egypt.

According to Abdel-Halim Nouredin, secretary-general of the SCA, the aim of the centre is to provide practical training as well as academic studies in the fields of restoration, excavation, and documentation, for both academics and students.

Meanwhile, the North Sinai Archaeological Salvage Project is now well under way. Numerous foreign archaeological missions are now participating in the project, either directly or by offering to undertake studies and surveys, contribute money or equipment, or send draftsmen, architects and archaeologists. Foreign countries joining the Egyptian team in the field now include the USA, France, Germany, Poland and Canada, and work is currently in progress at 20 different sites.

The Egyptian team, assisted by more than 200 labourers on three daily shifts, are working on both restoration and excavation projects in an attempt to open up new tourist destinations along the ancient road of El-Qantara Sharq to Rafah, known as the "Way of Horus".

The Way of Horus, explained Abdel-Maqoud, was used by commercial expeditions trading between Egypt and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. At points along this route stood fortresses, which housed army garrisons, royal couriers and traders, as well as supplies of food and water for travellers. These fortresses were first mentioned in ancient Egyptian literature as far back as 2100 BC.

The archaeologists' job is not easy. Excavations in northern Sinai are notoriously difficult, as most of the sites lie on salt flats or in mud. But, nevertheless, nearly 50 different sites have been identified in the area, which was heavily occupied in Graeco-Roman and Byzantine times, since the start of the salvage operation.

Among the discoveries in the last two years are a huge brick fortress with three entrances, an ancient barrage, a 2km-long dyke from Pelusian, columns on the site of a great amphitheatre, skeletons of crocodiles, Roman baths with exquisite mosaics, a Byzantine church, and massive stone quays at Mohamediyah, the ancient port of Gercha, the oldest on the Nile Delta's most easterly branch.

## How to get there

### Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

### Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Al-Azhar (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramses Street and Cairo Airport. Buses served to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai. Tel. 772-063.

### Cairo-Alexandria

Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Al-Azhar, then the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter, from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE20 thereafter. A VIP bus with phone access leaves Al-Azhar at 7.15am. Tickets from Al-Azhar LE28; from the airport LE33 each way.

### Cairo-Port Said

Services every half hour from 6am to 10pm, then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Al-Azhar, then Ramses Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

### Alexandria-Port Said

Services every half hour from 6am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Al-Azhar. Tickets LE22 each way.

### Cairo-Hurgada

Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Al-Azhar. Departs Hurgada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm; LE45 thereafter, both each way.

### Alexandria-Hurgada

Services 8pm, from Ramses Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurgada 2.30pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

### Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh

Services 11pm, from Tahrir, then Al-Azhar. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

### East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to north Sinai, south Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qalbi (near Ramses Square) at 7.15am and 7.45pm. Buses to Suez depart from Heliopolis at 7.15am and 7.45pm. Buses to north and south Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Al-Azhar Square. Tel. 482-4753.

### Cairo-Ismailia

Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qalbi, then Al-Azhar and Tugaid Square. Tickets for Ismailia bus LE25; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

### Cairo-Suez

Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalbi, then Al-Azhar and Tugaid Square. Tickets for Suez bus LE25; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

### Cairo-El-Arish

Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qalbi, then Al-Azhar and Tugaid Square. Tickets for El-Arish bus LE25; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

### Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh

Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm, from Al-Azhar, then Al-Azhar. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

### Cairo-Nur

Service 8am, from Al-Azhar, then Al-Azhar. Tickets for Nur bus LE31.

### West Delta Bus

Stations at Tahrir and Al-Azhar. Tel. 343-1046.

### Cairo-Hurgada

Services 8am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

### Cairo-Safage

Services 8am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

### Cairo-Ousseic

Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

### Cairo-Luxor

Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

### Cairo-Aswan

Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

### Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramses Station. Tel. 167 or 375-1335.

### Cairo-Luxor-Aswan

"French" deluxe trains with sleepers. Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE24 for foreigners and LE120 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE200 for foreigners, LE141 for Egyptians.

### "Spanish" deluxe trains with sleepers

Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE57; second class LE37.

### Cairo-Alexandria

"Torbini" trains. VIP train. Service 8am. Tickets: first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal. Standard train. Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets: first class LE22; second class LE17.

### "French" trains

Services about from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets: first class LE20; second class LE12.

### Cairo-Port Said

Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets: first class LE45; second class LE26.

### EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir. Adly 390-0595; Open 390-2444; or Helix 759-5006.

### Cairo-Aswan

Tickets LE300 for Egyptians; LE291 for foreigners, both round-trip.

### Cairo-Luxor

Tickets LE220 for Egyptians; LE280 for foreigners, both round-trip.

### Cairo-Hurgada

LE700 for foreigners, both round-trip.

### Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh

Tickets LE240 for Egyptians; LE281 for foreigners, both round-trip.

### MEMTA date

THE FIRST general meeting of the Middle East Mediterranean Travel and Tourist Association (MEMTTA) will take place in June in Tunis. Tunisia was chosen as the group's official headquarters at a preparatory meeting of the third economic summit of the Middle East and North African countries recently held in Rome.

MEMTTA is one of the associations that emerged from the peace process in the Middle East. It aims at supporting and developing the tourist industry in the region, and encouraging cooperation between the countries involved. Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, the Palestinian National Authority, Turkey, Cyprus and Israel are already members, and Oman, Qatar and Malta have applied to join.

### Top ten

THE World Tourism Organization's report stated that Spain ousted the United States as the world's number two destination for international tourists in 1995, while France remained in first place. Among the top earners of international tourism revenues, Italy closed in on France for the number two spot, earning \$27 billion in tourist receipts. The United States remained the world's top tourism earner and 1995 also marked the first time that China has ranked among the top ten tourism earners. Egypt has its work cut out to keep in the picture.

## EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abu Simbel Sales Office:	374836-374735
Alexandria Office: Ramli:	4833357-4829776
Gleem:	5865461-5865434
Airport Office:	4218464-4227808-4282837-4281989
Aswan Office:	315000/112/514
Airport Office:	498387-498568
Assiut Office:	323151-322711-324004-329407
Mansoura Office:	363978-363733
Hurgada Office:	443591/4
Airport Office:	442883-443597
Ismailia Office:	328937-221954-221951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	308500/112/514
Airport Office:	308567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382360
Marsa Matruh Office:	934396
Menoufia Office (Shebin El-Khayma):	233302-233323-233322
New Valley Office:	868/901695
Port Said Office:	224129-222870-228921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238833-239970
Sharm El-Sheikh Office:	606314-606409
Airport Office:	606408
Taba Office:	068530010-530011
Direct:	5783620
Tanta Office:	311750/311700
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1



The copper statues before treatment

photo: Mohamed Wassim

## Ultra-sonic treatment

A German-Egyptian team restores the oldest copper statues ever found in Egypt

The famous life-size copper statues of King Pepi I and his son Merime are being saved from rust and corrosion, reports Nevine El-Aref. "Pepi's son is already being tended to," said Mohamed Saleh, director-general of the Egyptian Museum, "and Pepi I is awaiting his turn."

Though Pepi I and the smaller statue of his son hail

from the Fifth Dynasty — over 4,000 years old — and are exceptionally well preserved, they still suffer from the ravages of time. Restorers from the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and the German Restoration and Maintenance Centre (GRMC) began last week to clean the surfaces of Merime with dry ultra-sonic equipment.

The two statues are made of cast metal, hammered with copper nails over hollow wooden cores. The kilt and headdress were added on separately, probably made with a plaster base and perhaps gilded. The eyes are inlaid.

Fepi I and Merime were discovered in the late 1900s buried under the flagstones of a chapel in the temple of Hier-

akonpolis near Edfu, in southern Egypt. The two statues originally stood side by side on a single base before being dismantled and buried, the son inside the father.

Usually on display on the ground floor of the Egyptian Museum, their temporary home is the museum laboratory, where the museum's

mummies were earlier restored.

Abdel-Halim Nouredin, secretary-general of the SCA, said the equipment provided by the Germans will be given to the museum after completion in six months. Egyptian metalwork restoration specialists will learn new European techniques and train in the use of laser rays.

### Travellers' book guide

## A mine of information on ancient Egypt

The lavishly illustrated *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* by Ian Shaw and Paul Nicholson is now on the Egyptian market. With 420 illustrations, among them 170 in colour, as well as 70 maps, plans and line drawings, the dictionary covers every aspect of life in ancient Egypt. Here, in a single publication, is the most accurate and up-to-date information available.

The range is enormous. At one end, there are such details as how the ancient Egyptians brewed their beer, built their houses and even about the games their children played. At the other, are current information on archaeological missions: where they are working and what they have discovered. Even more importantly, each entry is followed by a short bibliography which enables readers to pursue topics in greater detail.

Such a book, the first comprehensive and reliable general dictionary on ancient Egypt currently available in English, is vitally important in this age of technology. With easy access to literally mountains of material, many young scholars unwittingly draw on outdated source material and errors have a habit of propagating themselves. This publication not only helps standardise English spellings of ancient times, but informs us that such an oft-repeated phrase as "the

democratisation of the afterlife" is a misnomer.

And talking about misnomers: "Colossi of Memnon" is surely another. There was only one Colossus of Memnon, the northern statue, so described by early Greek visitors to Egypt. Therefore, the entry should surely have read "Colossi of Thebes", "Colossi of Amenhotep II", or "Colossus of Memnon and its companion".

There are more than 600 extensively cross-referenced and comprehensively-indexed entries. I chanced upon one error, minor but annoying. Interested to see how the ancient Hyksos capital was described, I looked up "Avaris" which wrongly referenced me to "Tell el Dab'a", instead of "Dab'a, Tell el". The entry was in "D", not "T".

The *Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* is not only a reference tool, it is a picture book with quality photographs, concise and in-

formative maps and plans, and a text which is a joy to read. The entry under "biblical connections" presented a problematic and controversial topic clearly. Under "flies", one learns why these insects were fashioned into honorific awards.

And, if not put off by such an entry as "Fara'in, Tell el-", one can learn that the semi-mythical predynastic capital of Lower Egypt, the counterpart of Upper Egypt, was a reality and has been discovered.

From "art" to "ethics", "oracles", "race", "taxation", "wine" and "women", here is everything you ever wanted to know about ancient Egypt.

The *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* is published by the British Museum Press and is available at the American University in Cairo Bookstore and all major bookshops. LE150.

Reviewed by Jill Kamil







Egypt's Ahmed Barada against South Africa's Craig Wapnick in the semi-finals (right), Salma Shabana against Maha Zein in the final (left)



photo: Salah Ibrahim

## Egypt dominates African squash

Egypt dominated the first All Africa Squash Championship, held in Cairo last week, an event which produced some unexpected results, as Eman Abdel-Moeti reports

Egypt's titans of squash clashed at last week's All Africa Squash Championships at Cairo Stadium's squash courts, with some surprising results. Sixty-five players from eight countries took part in the individual event, which ended with an all-Egyptian final between Ahmed Barada, world junior champion and placed at 37 in the world rankings, and Egyptian champion Amir Wagih, ranked 23 in the world.

Despite Barada's reputation for determination and perseverance, no one had really predicted that he would be able to overcome Wagih's formidable game. But signs that Wagih was not on top form were apparent in the semi-finals. His victory over Ahmed Faizy was not an easy one. Wagih clearly lacked his usual zeal, and the coach only managed to beat his junior player with a score 9-7, 9-3, 10-8.

Wagih's performance in the final against Barada

was a disappointment to all. Missing too many chances and making little effort to score, he seemed to hand the continental title to Barada on a silver platter. "I can't deny that Barada played better," admitted Wagih after the match. "I wasn't in shape because I've spent the last few months coaching the junior team for the World Junior Championship in July, rather than training."

Barada's victory was not the only surprise. The women's competition suffered a blow when the Nigerian and South African teams withdrew at the last minute, leaving only Egypt and Namibia to compete. Having only two teams meant that the event lost its official status, because, as African federation President Mahmoud Barakat explained, "African federation rules stipulate that official events must include at least four teams." However, he continued, "We decided not to cancel it altogether because the Namibian team had travelled

all the way to Egypt."

To add a more competitive edge, Egypt entered two teams, but in the midst of the debate over whether or not to hold the competition at all, many players had understandably lost enthusiasm.

Once again, the final was an all-Egyptian affair, with national champion Salma Shabana meeting her rival Maha Zein. In their many clashes, Zein has more often than not come out the loser, but once again, the spectators were in for a surprise. Shabana gave an astonishingly weak performance, leaving the match wide open for a Zein victory, which she managed, but only by the skin of her teeth (9-2, 6-9, 3-9, 9-1, 9-3).

"I don't want to make excuses for Salma, but she was under extreme pressure before the competition," said her father, Mustafa Shabana. "The timing was a last-minute decision, and on top of that she has her AUC exams, and the first World

Mixed Cup, at the end of the month." Wagih, Barada, Shabana and Salma have all been selected to represent Egypt in this event in Malaysia at the end of May.

After the individual events, it was time for the team competition. "The champions have been defeated. We can't afford any more surprises like that," commented Egypt's temporary coach, Ahmed Safwat. As expected, Egypt and South Africa, seen as the only two strong teams, met in the team final on Tuesday. For once, the match went according to expectations, and ended with an Egyptian victory.

The All Africa Championship was inaugurated this year as part of an International Squash Federation (ISF) drive to promote the sport in Africa.

A general assembly of the ISF last year decided to try and encourage the game in both Asia and Africa through holding regular competitions. The

African federation seemed to be dragging its feet, but following the resignation of federation President Maged Abatha, an extraordinary African general assembly was held on the sidelines of the All Africa Championship to re-elect a new board and a new president. Seventeen countries took part in the assembly, which elected Egypt's Mahmoud Barakat as president.

Barakat is a businessman and former squash player, who has organised many squash tournaments between Egypt and Kenya. He has adopted an active agenda to promote the sport in Africa — events already planned for the future include the senior All Africa Squash Championship in '98 in Tanzania, the juniors event in April '98 in Namibia, the Women's Junior Championship in Zimbabwe in April 1997, and finally an African Super Cup, a competition between Africa's best five nations, to be held next year in Kenya.

## Second-round knockout

African football is on the move this weekend as 48 clubs, including Egypt's Arab Contractors and Zamalek, fight to make it through to the next round in three African competitions. Eric Asomugha reports

Arab Contractors of Egypt, together with other top African football clubs, are facing an early exit from Confederation of African Football (CAF) competitions unless they can make up for their first-leg defeats in second-leg matches to be held throughout the continent this weekend. Forty-eight clubs, 16 from each competition, will be fighting for places in the final draws, which will take place in Cairo on 5 June.

In one of the tournaments, the African Cup Winners Cup, Arab Contractors will be on the attack in an attempt to erase the 1-3 away defeat they suffered at the hands of Simba of Tanzania. Contractors, African champions in 1982 and 1983, made it into this round by defeating Rayon Sport of Rwanda 2-1 on goal aggregate. They now need at least a 2-0 home win against Simba to qualify.

Stade d'Abidjan of Côte d'Ivoire will be travelling to Rabat to confront FUS of Morocco after a 1-1 draw in Abidjan. Pretoria City of South Africa, who won their last game 2-1, will be hosted by

Norwane of Botswana. Sodigraf of Zaire travel to Addis Ababa to consolidate their 7-0 first leg victory over MP Tigers, and Morada of Sudan, trying to make up for their 0-3 first leg defeat, are hosting Costa do Sol of Mozambique. Meanwhile, Canon of Cameroon gained early qualification after Olympic Beja of Tunisia failed to honour their first leg match.

In the Champions Cup, in absence of Mozambique's Desportivo from the first leg made Zamalek of Egypt the first team to win a place in the final draw. Looking good to join Zamalek are Shooting Stars of Nigeria, which defeated Dynamos of Zimbabwe 5-1 in Ibadan. Meanwhile, ASEC of Côte d'Ivoire, the 1995 finalists, will be guests of Jafaf of Dakar of Senegal after a surprising 1-1 draw at home. And JS Kabylie, winners of the 1995 African Cup, playing this year in the Champions Cup, are travelling to Burundi after a shocking goalless draw with Fantastique.

Defending champions the Orlando Pi-

rates of South Africa have a week's grace. Their match with Mufutura of Zambia has been delayed by the South Africans' participation in the Afro-Asian Clubs Championships. The Pirates' first leg match in Zambia last Saturday ended in a 1-1 draw.

In the CAF Cup, the powerful Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa went down 2-1 to the unknown USST of Reunion at home, a result which has put the Sundowns in a tight spot as they play away this weekend. This poor performance, coming on the heels of a 4-0 defeat in the South African pre-season Top Eight Cup may have put coach Clemence Westerhof's job on the line. Among the CAF Cup matches to be played this weekend, Rangers of Nigeria will be at home to Unisport Bafang of Cameroon after a 1-1 away draw. Oran of Algeria, leading 4-1 after the first leg, meet Ferroviario of Senegal in Dakar, and ESS of Tunisia host SOA of Côte d'Ivoire after the Tunisians' 2-1 defeat.

Sport and studies don't always mix, and for students who are also involved in sport at international level, life can be especially difficult during exams. Abeer Anwar meets student sportsmen and women trying to juggle their lives



Hazem Inam reviewing his lessons with his father Zamelek's Hamada Inam

The exam season is well and truly upon us, and while many students may devote every waking hour to their studies, Egypt's international sportsmen and women who are also enrolled in universities have the added stress of dealing with the conflicting demands of revision and a tough schedule of training and competition. Should they give their best to their sport or their studies? Some choose to prioritise one, others try to give their all to both.

As well as playing football for Zamalek and the national team, Khaled El-Ghondour is an undergraduate at the Cooperation Institute (Al-Ta'woun). Like many other sportsmen, he chose to study at the institute because it caters for the special needs of sportsmen. For El-Ghondour it also involved a commitment to football over his previous career path. "I was in the Faculty of Law for a year, but I transferred to the Cooperation Institute where I would be with other footballers and our situation as national team players would be taken into account, especially during the exam period," he said. Although El-Ghondour is now in the final year, he is not convinced it will be his last. In fact he's been a student at the institute for six years, his graduation delayed because football fixtures have sometimes got in the way of exams.

However, a friendly or even an international match is not necessarily sufficient reason for him to abandon exams. For example, he excused himself from Egypt's match with Algeria in January '95 to take his end of semester exams. "I did not regret this because our team lost the match," he reflected. But when it comes to events like the Olympics or the World Cup, El-Ghondour's priorities are clear: he wants to be on the field.

Even when no major championship is in progress, he does not lead the life of an average student; he

often goes to training camps accompanied by both books and tutors. He fits in an intensive two-week block of study before exams. "I know this seems a short time to prepare," he commented, "but I have benefited a lot from the new two-semester system." This system allows him to take courses lasting only one semester, on which he is examined only once. He is rather relieved that he will not have to make a choice when it comes to this year's exams — Zamalek's match with Mozambique in the African Championship, due to take place in May, was cancelled after Mozambique withdrew.

Despite El-Ghondour's torn loyalties, he seems like a model student in comparison with Abi's Reda Abdel-Aziz, also a national team player. Abdel-Aziz has been a student at the Cooperation Institute since 1987. For him there is no question — football comes first, and he will postpone exams for any match, even a friendly. And so, despite his nine-year university career, Abdel-Aziz is still only in the third year. "Between 1987 and 1991, I excused myself from exams to play in international and league championships," he explained. And, while injuries are normally considered bad luck for footballers, he described how an injury got him through the first year exams. "I had to stay in bed for four months which gave me time to study," he said. He made it the following year too, because he was out of the national team.

Abdel-Aziz is cheerfully optimistic about his prospects for this year. He managed to pass the first term exams because league matches were in the afternoon, giving him the chance to sit the exams in the morning and go directly to the match afterwards. For the end of year exams too, it all rests on the timing. "I just hope the league matches will be at noon to give me the chance to take the exams," he said.

But what about players who study outside the sports-oriented Cooperation Institute? Zamalek's

Hazem Inam, one of the youngest players in the national team and a second year student at the Faculty of Commerce, sees the sport-study issue rather differently from his national teammate. "I think that education is more important than football," he argued, "because at some point I will have to retire and rely on a career in commerce."

This is not to say he is prepared to abandon a promising career on the football field. His efforts to combine sport with education led to him having to repeat the first year at the faculty, but then he found his key to success — he pulls out of matches if he has an exam. "I think that there are many players that could replace Hazem on the field, but there is only one Hazem who can sit the exams," he explained.

During this year's first term exams, Inam was in closed camp in preparation for the African Championship in Johannesburg. He took one day off, with the permission of coach Rued Kroll and studied at home. He then sat his exams, rushing straight back to training after each one. "But I think that this time I will be able to sit for the exams because the league matches can be played without me," he said.

Sportsmen and women in other fields can find it even more difficult to strike a balance. According to judo champion Heba Rashid, it is particularly hard for athletes involved in individual, rather than team, sports. "It's very hard to miss a match because often it's a case of gaining qualification for the next round of a tournament," she explained. "This is something footballers don't have to contend with."

Rashid, African, Arab and Egyptian judo champion in the open weight and ranked third in the last World Championship, has had to make some sacrifices in her education to fulfill herself in her sport. She enrolled at the Open University rather than Cairo University to allow a more flexible schedule for training and competing, but has nevertheless found herself stuck in the second year for three years.

"My younger sister started university after me and finished before me," she admitted. She was, she said, able to pass the first year easily because she was an unknown at the time, but after that her judo career took off and she felt unable to miss training camps and competitions. She will miss the exams this year too because she is participating in Atlanta '96.

In her view, the luckiest athletes are those with the opportunity and resources to study in the US, like swimmer Rania Elwani or tennis player Tamer El-Sawi.

Meanwhile, squash player Omar El-Borolousy, ranked 53 in the world, has yet another experience of combining education and sport. A second year AUC student, he has managed to pass all his exams so far, while still maintaining a full training and competing schedule. He attributes his success to the flexibility of the system at AUC, and the attitude of his professors. "The semester system has made it easier for me, because if I miss a semester I can always make it up later," he said. "And my professors are always ready to help because they believe in me as a squash player."

His teachers are generally willing to postpone exams, or allow him to take them early, if there is a clash between exam dates and championship fixtures. And El-Borolousy is keen to pass. Like footballer Khaled El-Ghondour he puts in two weeks of study before an exam. He also goes without sleep for two nights before the exam to allow extra studying time. "I challenge myself because I want to be a successful engineer before being a good squash player," he said.

This year, El-Borolousy will be able to sit his exams because he will be playing in the All-Ahram International Championship at the Giza Pyramids. He knows it will be a tough schedule, but he is determined, he says, to "double my effort" and succeed in both.

## Olympics countdown

### US tops basketball

THE UNITED STATES won its fifth consecutive game in a pre-Olympic women's basketball tournament, defeating Cuba 108-79.

In another match, Australia improved its record to 3-2 with a 91-62 win over Ukraine. The tournament is being used as a leadup to the Olympics basketball competition, which starts on 21 July in Atlanta.

### Touretsky unsuspended

SUSPENDED Russian swimming coach Gennadi Touretsky has been granted late accreditation to the Atlanta Olympics after intervention by the Australian Olympic Committee.

The Australian Swimming Coaches' Association (ASCA) last year banned Touretsky, coach of 100m world record-holder Alexander Popov, and now working at Australia's Sports Institute in Canberra, from involvement with Australian teams for four years.

The sanction was placed on Touretsky after he was fined and spent 30 days in jail in Hawaii after being convicted of assaulting a fellow passenger on a trans-Pacific airliner.

### Top runner down

QU YUNXIA, the world record holder in the women's 1,500 metres, finished a distant eighth in the event in China's Olympic trials, casting doubt on whether she would qualify for the Atlanta Olympics.

Qu, 25, controversial coach Ma Junren's top runner, finished the race in Nanjing in 4 minutes, 13.05 seconds. Wang Chunyan won in 4:09.28.

### Flame pops out

AFTER a brief snuff-out, the Olympic flame is back on track. The flame is slowly making its way to Atlanta, arriving by ferry on Tuesday after going out while crossing the Tacoma Narrows Bridge.

The torchbearer, cyclist Harley Sheffield, was on the bridge when a tire blew. The torch popped out of its holder, fell onto the bridge and broke into pieces, extinguishing the flame. A replacement torch has been lit.



# Taher Abu Zeid: Facing the nation

Um Kulthoum's voice, and the day Cairo burned

Neat facial features — ageless, as though the strains of time had somehow bypassed them — trim dapper figure, thin grey hair — all suggest an offscreen Charlie Chaplin.

"Yes indeed, says Taher Abu Zeid, "I am unabashedly romantic, have been since my very early teens."

Taher Abu Zeid, lawyer, politician, and broadcaster, was born in Talkha in 1922. He went to primary school in Mansoura, across the Nile.

"There was no bridge at the time, so we crossed by boat twice daily. This was the most exciting aspect of school. I just love the water, and anything to do with water."

Taher's family was middle-class, his father the much respected religious registrar (*mu'awin shar'i*).

"I am very surprised when I see caricatures of the *mu'awin* ridiculed in cinema and on the stage. This was a very prestigious position in the community; his opinions and views were sought and respected. But Taher remembers his mother most vividly. "Imagine a home with no refrigerator, freezer, cooker, TV, video, not even electric lights... But she was always cheerful, bustling in and out of the house, bringing in water from the barrel outside, cooking, washing, gossiping. She was totally illiterate, but what wisdom she possessed."

Taher Abu Zeid's childhood was peopled by characters which seem folkloric to a modern city dweller: *Amm* Mahfouz, the water carrier, for whom social restrictions were suspended; he was allowed free access to any house in the village, even when the head of the household was not around; *Amm* Ahmed Diab, the local medic, who had become a walking pharmacopoeia as a result of years of experience running the local pharmaceutical storehouse. Today many women refuse to see male doctors, but everyone trusted *Amm* Ahmed. "It was, as one says, another time and another place," sighs Taher.

It was a happy household until tragedy struck. His elder brother, Said, a teacher who showed great promise, contracted tuberculosis and died at the age of 23.

"What was even more tragic," says Taher, "is that Said was in love with the daughter of the wealthiest family in Talkha. She was also in love with him, but class difference did not sanction such a marriage. Said died young and heartbroken."

His brother's death marked the beginning of a sadness which has never left Abu Zeid. The writings of Mustafa El-Manfalouti developed his romantic bent. El-Manfalouti had published a series of romantic novels, adapted from the French, which were popular and widely read.

Abu Zeid's ambition was to become a lawyer and, after finishing high school, he took a job as a bailiff, learning the ropes of the legal system and acquiring a certain standing in Dikimiss, the small town where he had been appointed: "There I was, just over 18 and treated with great deference by the people, even being addressed as Taher Bey."

One day he was supposed to repossess a sewing machine because the owner had defaulted on payments. "I went along with the company representative to carry out the court order, and the scene was something I will never forget. There was this widow with her three daughters, wailing and weeping as though they had lost their closest relative."

Abu Zeid paid the instalment, of course, and had only two pounds left to see him through the rest of the month.

As a bailiff, he was able to study law as a part-time student, until this was forbidden by the Ministry of Justice. This did not deter Taher and he went off to meet the formidable under-secretary, Abdel-Razek El-Sanhouri, one of Egypt's greatest legal minds.

Impressed with the young man's tenacity, Sanhuri gave in, and Abu Zeid eventually completed his law degree and went into practice in Alexandria.

There, a friend, who happened to be the engineer at the local radio station, invited him to attend a voice test for potential radio announcers. "It will be fun to see them stutter and stumble," said the friend.

Abu Zeid went along, and the friend suggested that, since he was there, he might as well take the test. To his utter amazement he passed. "At the time I did not even own a radio set," he says incredulously.

This brought down the curtains on his legal career and began a long and successful association with the media.

It was the time of the great radio pioneers Mohamed Fathi, Ali El-Rai, Abdel-Hamid Younes, Tawfiq Tawfiq, Hosni El-Radi... today's Radio Hall of Fame.

Taher recalls how impressed he was with the fitted carpets and the air conditioned studio. "It was a far cry from my small bailiff's office in Dikimiss."

Rapid rise in the professional hierarchy was possible for the talented. "We were really jacks of all trades: announcers, newscasters, programme presenters, even actors in radio dramas," he remembers.

His first outside broadcast — OB in the jargon — was in November 1951. It was a political occasion, and Taher's legal oratorical training stood him in good stead. The OB was a success.

Soon afterwards he was asked by the late great Abdel-Wahab Youssef to join him in an OB of an *Umm Kulthoum* concert. "Sitting in the radio booth at the theatre, not only hearing, but also seeing the great lady was like a far off dream come true. I remembered my days in Dikimiss, no radio set of my own, having to sit in the coffee house to hear her sing." His voice almost cracks with emotion, and it is clear that this was a quantum leap in Abu Zeid's life.

His career was just beginning. One very popular programme was "A Tour with the Microphone", which involved going out into the streets with a popular film or stage star and just talking to people. *Garab Hazzak* ("Try Your Luck") was another of the most popular radio shows at the time. People from all walks of life came into the theatre to participate in the quiz. It was during one of the recording sessions that he met his future wife, Camelia El-Shenawani, today head of women's programmes on TV. Abu Zeid, ironically, had tried his luck — and won.



Photo: Fawzi Shafiq

Folklore and folk art was very much a part of Taher's early upbringing. Memories of *Amm* Ahmed and *Amm* Mahfouz perhaps made it inevitable that he go on to produce and present a folklore programme "which was instrumental in bringing the topic to the notice of radio audiences, and raising awareness of our heritage." It was also this type of programme that introduced such future stars as Sayed Mekki, Fayza Ahmed, Abdel-Rahman El-Ahmed, and Salah Jahin.

Many turning points in Egypt's history are vividly engraved on Taher's mind, and one feels that he was never able to make the break between emotions and professionalism so characteristic of today's snappy-faced, monotonous announcers. The day Cairo burned, 26 January 1952, all chaos broke loose. Taher was in the studio just before the end of transmission. "I was so incensed at the events of the day that, rather than close with the next day's programme preview, I played a nationalistic song by *Umm Kulthoum*. This of course was risking my career, as you could not unilaterally introduce programme changes."

Again, in 1956, Abu Zeid "was supposed to go and report the withdrawal of the British and French troops from Port Said. There was a problem at the British checkpoint, and we were not allowed to proceed further." This did not deter Abu Zeid, however.

"On the Egyptian side of the checkpoint," he remembers with a twinkle of the eyes, "there was an ambulance with a driver and paramedic. I was there with Saad Labib. We looked at each other, we looked at the ambulance attendants, they looked at us. No words were exchanged. Just like a movie... The next scene saw Saad and I driving the ambulance through the British checkpoint." They got their story — just like the movies.

"The 1956 war," remembers Abu Zeid, "was one of the brief, isolated, shining moments of Arab solidarity. Our transmitters were bombed, and we went off air. Within minutes you could hear the call sign: 'Hona Al-Qahira' (This is Cairo) from Damascus, Baghdad, Amman, Algiers, Riyadh... every Arab station took up the call sign."

With such strong political convictions, it was only a step to political activity — a step he took in 1958, when he ran in the National Assembly elections. Here his mother played a pivotal role. "I was up against an army officer, incidentally also a friend. I felt the odds were not in my favour. It was my mother who called her friends and neighbours, who in turn called their friends, and before we realised it, some 2,000 women were out voting for me." Taher won, and represented Talkha until the Assembly was abolished in 1960. He had to leave the radio, as members of the Assembly were not allowed to hold jobs at the time.

Taher returned to radio and TV, this time as a freelancer. "Face the Nation" was a raging success, causing great embarrassment and discomfort in official circles. The programme was described by the foreign media as a lone light of democracy in the night of totalitarianism. It was stopped after the 1967 debacle, as public opinion was too enraged and frustrated and would not have tolerated officials glibly trying to explain away the unexplainable.

In 1971, Abu Zeid was one of those ousted during Sadat's palace coup, only to be reinstated three hours later — a result of crossed wires somewhere in the system. But he never went back to radio.

He went for a stint as director of the Arabic service of Radio Monte Carlo, returning two years later, and was asked by the then minister of information, Kamal Abul-Magd, to reintroduce "Face the Nation" on TV. This he did, until it was finally put to rest following the bread riots of January 1977.

Today Taher Abu Zeid spends his time on his farm in Nubariya, or with Omar, his grandson.

"People used to seek each other out for the sake of friendship and neighbourliness, not for ulterior motives. I am afraid that today's materialism is eroding this feeling."

He notices that people smile less,

and laugh even more seldom. Abu Zeid is well placed to notice the differences between then and now, and it saddens him that people just seem to care less and less.

"But this is less so in rural areas," he quickly notes. "Whenever there is a catastrophe, everybody rushes in to the rescue."

After the 1973 War, he believes, these positive traits came once more to the fore. "During our youth, there were battles to be fought. And we fought them. The struggle for independence, guerrilla warfare in the Suez Canal zone, the Ismailiya police station incident of 1952 that led to the burning of Cairo..."

All these issues were vividly and vociferously expressed in the liberal climate of the time. The people were involved...

He adds, "Had the revolution taken place on 26 January 1952, it would really have been a people's revolution. Instead it was an army coup. True, it had great popular support, but it chose the path of one-man rule, culminating in the 1967 War. I cannot say the army was defeated, that is not fair — defeat was a result of a decayed system, not battlefield prowess."

But Abu Zeid wouldn't like to close on a sour note. "We Egyptians have a unique capacity for expression, a talent for formulating philosophies that truly capture our spirit of optimism and general cheerfulness... This can be seen in some street names... The one I have in mind is called: 'Light of Darkness Street'."

Profile by Mohamed Islam

## PIECE OF MIND



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### Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostri

"I can think of nothing better to do on Saturday at 7pm than to go to the Hanager Arts Centre and watch the brilliant documentary film by my good friend, director Yousri Nasrallah, *On Boys, Girls and the Veil*. But excited as I am, this won't be the first time I see the film. Yes, I was there when it received the Egyptian Film Critics' best video documentary award at the last Ismailia Film Festival, and at the Locarno Film Festival, where it was recognised as the best video entry. This great film about relationships dominated by social obligation was also screened on French and German TV, and recently in New York at the San Francisco Film Festival."

And as I come to the end of the novel I'm currently reading, the most perfectly timed of all book fairs begins tomorrow. Held by the Al-Ahram distribution agency in cooperation with AUC, in AUC's Oriental Hall, the book fair will be opened at 5pm, and books in both Arabic and English will be on sale for three days.

### MARITIME TRANSPORT COMPANY EGYPTIAN NAVIGATION COMPANY 2, EL NASR STREET, ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT SALE OF VESSELS BY AUCTION

THE COMPANY ANNOUNCES THE SALE OF THE UNDER MENTIONED VESSELS (SEPARATELY) AT SUEZ PORT IN THEIR PRESENT CONDITION AND AT THEIR PRESENT LOCATION.

VESSEL'S NAME	RAFAH	AL ANFUSHI	AL CHATBY	ABU QIR	SIDI BISHR
TYPE	GENERAL CARGO	GENERAL CARGO	GENERAL CARGO	GENERAL CARGO	GENERAL CARGO
DATE OF BUILD	1977	1976	1976	1976	1979
NAME OF SHIPYARD	PORT SAID (EGYPT)	SETOUCHIZOSEN (JAPAN)	SHIMODA (JAPAN)	KYRUSHIMA (JAPAN)	PORT SAID (EGYPT)
L.O.A.	118.00 M	119.40 M	119.40 M	114.29 M	118.00 M
BREADTH	16.00 M	18.00 M	18.00 M	17.80 M	16.00 M
G.R.T.	4900 TONS	5768 TONS	5768 TONS	4716 TONS	4900 TONS
N.R.T.	2675 TONS	3417 TONS	3417 TONS	2981 TONS	2675 TONS
D.W.T.	6640 TONS	8262 TONS	8262 TONS	7520 TONS	6640 TONS
LOCATION	SUEZ PORT	SUEZ PORT	SUEZ PORT	SUEZ PORT	SUEZ PORT
BASIC PRICE	1000.000 US\$	1.200.000 US\$	1.500.000 US\$	850.000 US\$	1.200.000 US\$
DATE OF AUCTION	1/6/1996	2/6/1996	3/6/1996	4/6/1996	5/6/1996
12.00 O'CLOCK LOCAL TIME					

#### TERMS OF AUCTION:

1. BIDDER HAS TO DEPOSIT THE SUM OF US\$ 50,000 FOR EACH VESSEL.
2. TAXATION CARD IS COMPULSORY FOR EGYPTIAN BIDDERS.
3. TERMS, TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS AND GENERAL CONDITIONS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE PURCHASING SECTOR AGAINST US\$ 500 FAX NO. 4831345-4831656
4. VISIT AND SURVEYING OF VESSELS ALLOWED DURING WORKING HOURS FROM TODAY UP TO AUCTION DATE.
5. AUCTION WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE HEAD OFFICE, 2 EL NASR STREET, ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT AT THE ABOVE MENTIONED DATES AT 12 NOON LOCAL TIME.

سازمان چاپ